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HERBERT CHAUNCEY:

A MAN

MORE SINNED AGAINST THAN SINNING.

BY

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LOCKET

HERBERT CHAUNCEY:

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SINNING.

CHAPTER I.

FERRIS *v.* CHAUNCEY.

WITH some satisfaction I learnt that Beckington, between whom and myself there had been more than one bitter passage of arms in the House of Commons, had accepted the brief offered him by my solicitors, with an expression of goodwill towards his old antagonist very creditable to his feelings. Of course, the brief had been offered to him without my knowledge. Ruffhead knew better than to ask my leave, but went to Beckington, and had a confidential interview with him, unauthorized by me. Beckington, by this time, was pretty well aware that I had been

unfairly used. He was a generous man, too, in the main, and the idea of coming to my aid, now that I was well nigh crushed to the earth, pleased him mightily; he espoused my cause with energy.

The reader need not fear that I am going to inflict upon him a full report of the great battle of "*Ferris versus Chauncey*." I shall select from my notes only such passages as seem to have some interest, or are necessary to the right understanding of my position.

The hinge upon which the whole case turned, was this; did my cousin Jeffry execute the will devising his property to me, before or after his marriage with Lucy Apwood?

If after, then the will was good, and the property was mine. If before, then the will was invalidated by the marriage, and the property was not mine, but Ferris's.

A good many questions claimed attention, besides the dispute as to the date of the marriage. For example: was the marriage itself valid? On this point there was a good deal to be said. Again, as to the marriage register book at St. Pierre. The page, containing the entry of the marriage, had been fraudulently abstracted,

but for whose interest was it that the entry should be abstracted? Again, was the register book of any value, one way or the other? It was maintained that Guernsey, being in the diocese of Winchester, was subject to ecclesiastical law, and that the register book could, therefore, be tendered as evidence.

Of parole evidence of the date of the marriage we had as yet heard little, but no doubt Ferris's solicitors were prepared with it. After the lapse of many years, to prove the exact date of an occurrence by verbal testimony appears a difficult task; the task is much lightened when money is abundant and agents are unscrupulous. We were very much afraid of Malpus. Messrs. Ruffhead set to work with industry to examine into his personal history from boyhood to old age, and declared themselves highly edified and gratified with the result of their researches.

The trial of Ferris *v.* Chauncey came off, then, at the assizes at Stoke-upon-Avon, in Meadshire, where the *venue* was laid. Of course there was much excitement; a large number of witnesses were assembled at the two hotels, "chartered" respectively by Ferris's, and my own, solicitors.

The “Feathers” was Ferris’s hotel ; the “Hope and Anchor,” Chauncey’s. There was a strict line of demarcation drawn between the two sets of witnesses. The solicitor on either side watched over his own, as vigilantly as a shepherd guards his particular flock in the multitudinous gathering of a Scotch Tryste.

Rosamund remained at Glenarvon, contrary to the earnest wish of Mr. Ruffhead, who, with tears in his eyes, pressed her to show herself in court, if it were but for half an hour, during the judge’s summing up. This, of course, could not be heard of, and I drove to Stoke-upon-Avon alone.

On arriving at the “Hope and Anchor,” I found Mr. Ruffhead in the act of marshalling the witnesses, introducing them to one another, showing each of them his bedroom, all the time throwing out words of encouragement and exhortation, to evoke enthusiasm for the cause of Chauncey, and induce them to pull together “with a will ;” then winding up by ushering the whole body into the large room where meals were to be served.

Eating and drinking are operations eminently favourable to knitting together the hearts of

Englishmen. Who, at a *table d'hôte*, at home or abroad, has not felt his heart gradually expand to his neighbour, however distressingly vulgar or offensively surly he might at first sight have appeared? Who has not unbent to a bagman, or recognized a tinge of benevolence in the dyspeptic bosom of a nabob? Nay, the very man who was your companion in a railway carriage the day before, and persisted in keeping the window closed though you were suffering from premonitory symptoms of apoplexy, becomes, under the genial influence of dinner, a neighbour positively winning and agreeable.

The witnesses, then, having been well shaken together and amalgamated through the agency of liberal but judicious feasting, began to feel at home, and wax enthusiastic. An *esprit de corps* sprang up, which gladdened the hearts of the professionals.

The struggle resembled an election contest rather than a law-suit on the issue of which the ownership of a fine property depended. The witnesses associated almost exclusively with those of their own side. In fact, a decided coldness of manner was evinced towards the opposite party.

On the eve of the important day, the dinner at my hotel was quite a formidable affair. All my witnesses were congregated there, and Mr. Ruffhead was indefatigable in his efforts to interest them in my success; about an hour before dinner was served he requested a private interview with myself. After some preliminary remarks, he came to the point, and proffered an anxious request. Would I join the company, and take the head of the table? At first I flatly refused, but Mr. Ruffhead was not easily baffled; he laid his hand on my arm, with an air of intense earnestness, exclaiming,—

“My dear sir, I entreat you, at this important juncture of your affairs, to lay aside your own judgment, and trust to mine. The crisis is come. The witnesses are in good heart; they are warming to the work; they are beginning, as it were, to ‘simmer.’ But, my dear sir, we must blow up the fire a little hotter yet; the water must boil, my dear sir; we must get up the steam thoroughly; no half-measures will do. A fillip is wanted, sir; merely a fillip, and the thing’s done!” His fingers closed upon my arm, and he added, in a voice of much solemnity, “Mr.

Chauncey, you must — and shall — take the chair!"

I consented at last; and, certainly, the enthusiasm of the company, when my solicitor led me into the room, was unbounded. I was personally introduced to each and every witness. The total number was twenty-five, male and female. It was a curious gathering.

There was an eminent analytical chemist, summoned to prove the ink and paper and sealing-wax of certain documents, tendered in evidence on behalf of the complainant, were more modern by five years than they ought to be. This gentleman was also to examine and expose any fresh documentary evidence that might be thrown into court after the cause was on. He was assisted by his partner, a young man, who gazed at him all dinner time with a countenance of affectionate awe, touching to behold. There were five or six individuals, of various professions and callings, who were to swear that certain handwriting was not my cousin Jeffry's. There were several natives of Guernsey, prepared to depose on oath, that my cousin arrived in that island three days subsequent to the date of the alleged

marriage. Other witnesses proved, by way of collateral evidence, my cousin's persuasion, up to the moment when his intellect began to fail, that the estate of Glenarvon was legally devised to me, and that, as a matter of course, I should be his successor.

But one of the witnesses that attracted most attention was an unmarried lady, of good family and fortune—Lady Mary de V——. Lady Mary chanced to be at Guernsey at the period of my cousin's visit there, and had something to say which Mr. Ruffhead thought might do good. I believe, however, the real object of securing her was to throw a little *éclat* on my side of the question. Lady Mary had a fine, intelligent countenance, an aristocratic profile, an eye in which fearlessness blended with frankness, a dignified bearing. She was attired with more regard to the picturesque than is usual in the *salons* of Paris or London.

Mr. Ruffhead admitted that her evidence would not have much weight in point of law:—

“ But, then, my dear sir, consider the moral influence of rank, beauty, and fortune! Consider the pictorial effect of that face and figure in the

witness-box! Consider the artistic colours of that costume, sir; the folds of that drapery, sir! Why, a jury must have hearts of stone, and brains of lead, if they stand it, sir!"

Thus Mr. Ruffhead reasoned. Accordingly, I was especially charged to do homage to Lady Mary de V——. I took her in to dinner, and placed her on my right hand. The analytical chemist followed. The rest were summoned, one after the other, by the head-waiter, who read off the names from a list drawn up by Mr. Ruffhead. Mr. Ruffhead himself acted as "vice," and sat at the bottom of the table. A few friends of the solicitors joined the party. There was an excellent dinner, and claret and champagne from my own cellar circulated freely round the table.

Lady Mary de V—— was gracious and kind; she said to me, whilst I was labouring at a haunch of venison,—

"Mr. Chauncey, I have long watched your career, and believe you are an honest man, for you voted in favour of Maynooth."

I was hot and flurried by my exertions and the awkwardness of my position at such a

strange *réunion*, but I would not conceal my principles. The junior solicitor, who sat near me, winked with respectful earnestness to imply that I must humour my fair companion, but in vain.

"No, Lady Mary, I voted against Maynooth."

Much to my relief, Lady Mary, raising her voice in strong contralto strain, rejoined,—

"Very good, Mr. Chauncey, very good. I respected you before, now I honour you; there's not one man in a million that would not have told me a lie under the circumstances!" Then, in a lower voice, added, as she took a sip of her champagne, "Mr. Chauncey, I drink your good health, and heartily wish you success!"

The cloth was removed. We drank his Majesty's health; then the Queen, and the rest of the Royal Family; after which, amidst much tapping of the table and clinking of glasses, Mr. Ruffhead rose, and asked leave to propose a toast:—

"Prosperity to the rightful owner of Glenarvon, Herbert Chauncey, Esquire, and confusion to his enemies."

It seemed strange, when I afterwards reflected,

in the quiet of my own room, upon that curious scene. But, at the moment, the warm sympathy and eager good wishes of the company, the uproarious applause—for thirty people can make a good deal of noise after dinner—the spectacle of so many faces turned towards me all round the table, beaming with friendly excitement, the somewhat theatrical but honest vehemence of “Mr. Vice,” all combined to rouse a pleasurable feeling in my mind.

Was it nothing, after experiencing months of unjust contumely and scorn, to find myself for a time surrounded by friends and supporters, ardent for my success, and heedless of the calumnies launched against me?

As we rose to retire, Lady Mary touched my arm with her fan.

“Mr. Chauncey, favour me with your attention for a brief space.”

I listened with respect.

“This is no doubt an exciting moment, Mr. Chauncey, but take a word of caution from a woman much older than yourself. Remember, that in two days from this time, you may—I do not say you will—walk out of this hotel a

pauper. I am blunt, but I am your friend. What these people are, time will show." And her ladyship shook me graciously by the hand, and sailed away to her private apartments. I did not relish the observation at the time, but it was kindly meant, and not unworthy of being laid to heart.

The opposition party, at the other hotel, had no Lady Mary to boast of; but, as a set-off, there was a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England. A good deal was made of this clergyman. He was paraded about the town in a costume then beginning to be popular amongst High Church ecclesiastics—a coat with a stand-up collar, knee-breeches and gaiters of black cloth, and white neckcloth of pruned and contracted appearance. Thus attired, he met us at every corner of the street, and created some sensation. Mr. Ruffhead at last became exasperated, and finding one of our witnesses, a butcher by trade, had been a field preacher in early life, he tricked him out in a huge white necktie, and black coat with flapping skirts, and presented him to the public as a pious Nonconformist minister of the school of Jay, of Bath.

There was a rival chemist in the analytical line, Groper by name, amongst Ferris's witnesses. This gentleman was summoned to contradict and crush my friend Proby. Groper scowled at Proby, with looks of unspeakable malignity, from the opposite side of the street; Proby retaliated by assuming an air of benevolent pity. The common herd of witnesses on either side went about the town in little bands, counting it treason to associate with any of the opposite party.

One or two of the "minor characters" were detected in a disreputable attempt to fraternize with the enemy, and compelled to pay forfeit, there and then, in the shape of a bottle of port. A crowd of idle loungers hung about the inn doors from morning till night, and probably from night till morning too.

At the first outset, I think the least excited person connected with the business was myself. I do not mean to say I was not anxious, but so many troubles and disappointments had beset me, so many cares still haunted me, that my great desire was to have the matter settled, and know the worst.

The trial lasted three days, in consequence of

a juror being taken ill in the early part of the proceedings. It was painfully tedious; yet, naturally, as the trial proceeded, I became more interested, and I realized the full importance of the issue.

The opening speech of Ferris's counsel rather startled me; then the examination and cross-examination of witnesses—so close, so keen, so ingeniously mischievous—mixed with lively sparring between the opposing barristers, kept my attention fixed.

The contingency dawned on my mind, that if plaintiff's counsel made out his case as stated to the jury, he would get a verdict, and Glenarvon would be lost.

Ruffhead, at the close of the first day, saw that I seemed uneasy and depressed. He clutched me by the hand, and congratulated me on showing signs of emotion.

“My dear sir, this is as it should be. I like to see a client anxious. It tells upon a jury. Your phlegmatic fellows, with hearts no bigger than a button, damage their own cause, and had far better be out of court. The eyes of the jury are upon you. Remember it as you

sit in court, and bear yourself accordingly. Levity is bad, but torpor is worse. Look as if you were in earnest. The case is going on well—very well; but we must be in earnest, we must indeed."

Next day, Ruffhead pestered me in court by perpetually throwing to me little notes containing insignificant remarks on things in general, and requesting an answer. This, he afterwards explained to me, was done from policy, with a view to convince the jury that I was labouring under the most intense anxiety as to the result of the trial.

The solicitor for the plaintiff made a great effort to bring into court Mr. Ferris and his two daughters, attired in deep mourning. I believe he so far succeeded, that mourning costume was actually purchased and prepared; but either Ferris's better feelings prevailed at the last moment, or his daughters proved refractory; for none of the family appeared, except an old woman who had nursed the young ladies in their infancy, and being established in a conspicuous position in court, had orders to groan deeply whenever the late Mr. Jeffry Ferris's name was mentioned.

Unfortunately, she applied a certain flask of cherry brandy given her by plaintiff's solicitor, so frequently to her lips, that she at length got "fuddled," and groaned continuously. Whereupon, the high sheriff, supposing her to be poorly, directed two of the javelin men to carry her bodily out of court.

There was a large attendance of Meadshire gentry, amongst whom ladies, as usual on such occasions, greatly preponderated. Sir Claude and Lady Cockayne occupied prominent seats; Sir Claude smiling affably upon the solicitors, for plaintiff and defendant, as if he wished success to both sides; Lady Cockayne gazing grimly upon the scene with the air of an ill-used woman whom a sense of public duty compelled to be present against her will. There was the Rev. Mr. Worritt, taking snuff and criticizing the remarks of counsel with waspish severity. There was Major Blandy, nodding good-humouredly to me on an average every half an hour; Mrs. Blandy, *née* Clara Lamplugh, being very savage against me on Ada Littlecot's account, would not suffer him to show me any more substantial tokens of his good-will. She was of the opposite faction; I could not find fault with her.

The high sheriff was Marsham Mallows ; he was half choked in a deputy-lieutenant's uniform, but tried to look as if he liked it. Full of suavity, yet full of zeal, the "high" was for ever whispering to the under sheriff ; making frantic signals to javelin men in distant parts of the court ; or, with bent head, murmuring queries into the judge's ear as to whether the temperature of the court was agreeable. Marsham Mallows had brought his mechanical skill into play, and, by the aid of a long line, managed to open or shut a swing-window a considerable distance off. The result was a loud clap every ten minutes or so, when the window was shut, and a rush of cold air when it was opened ; the noise was bad enough, but the thorough draught worse. After half the barristers, and all the jury, were sneezing violently, and the judge had the ear-ache, the "high" began to have qualms of conscience, and, shutting the window, let the string dangle by his side untouched.

The sensation of being stared at like a rare importation from the tropics was new, but scarcely agreeable. Eye-glasses and opera-glasses of all sizes were directed towards me. One man,

a sporting character from a distant county, actually produced a pocket telescope, for the purpose of studying my personal appearance to the best advantage. But I had the satisfaction of seeing his telescope knocked out of his hand by an irascible gentleman, with a high-dried complexion, and stiff, military bearing. It was Colonel Dinder, who took it into his head, quite erroneously, that the sporting character was staring at his wife, the worthy Mrs. Dinder, a few seats below. There was a considerable uproar ; and, finally, the sporting gentleman had to beat a retreat out of court, much discomfited.

Malpus proved a very awkward witness against me. His white hair and solemn expression of countenance, the pious ejaculations introduced into his narrative, the tears he managed to squeeze out of his eyes by dint of staring hard at the skylight, and the modest, self-deprecating air with which he wiped the moisture away with a clean pocket-handkerchief, made a favourable impression on the jury. Ruffhead himself owned that the thing was well done ; that the old man was a decided hit, and had done us some mischief.

Malpus accompanied my cousin Jeffry to

Guernsey, and, in the clearest, calmest, and most solemn manner, swore to the precise day and hour when the marriage ceremony was performed. His evidence was short. He avoided going over too large a field lest he should make a mistake and be tripped up by my counsel. He produced a diary in which was a memorandum of importance. "My dear and honoured master married this day"—naming the day—"to Miss Lucy Apwood. Heaven's choicest blessings attend them!" He deposed to the authenticity of my cousin's signature to various documents.

As for the diary, I may mention in passing, that it proved a terrible bone of contention to the two analytical chemists. Groper protested, until he was purple in the face, that the ink with which the entry was written was ink of the year 18—, when the marriage took place; what was more, it was Guernsey ink, not English. Proby pointed out that the entry was written with a steel pen; and he could swear, by the peculiar character of the handwriting, that it was one of the "anti-friction currente-calamo pens," the patent for which was only obtained a year ago; therefore the entry was plainly a recent insertion

in the diary. This statement made some impression on the unsophisticated public, but I regretted to detect a furtive smile on the judge's countenance.

However, I must return to Malpus. His cross-examination was undertaken by Beckington, to whom Ruffhead hoarsely whispered, "Don't spare him!" and Beckington did not spare him. Fold after fold was torn from his well-preserved reputation; film after film brushed off his venerable aspect; until the old man stood exposed in the face of day, an undeniable hypocrite.

But Beckington, as was often his wont, went a little too far. It was proved from the old man's lips that he owed me a grudge. It was proved that he had been implicated in one or two rather dirty transactions. Some passages of his life were laid open to view, and the result was not agreeable. But though his prestige was damaged and his humbug exposed, it was not proved that Malpus was necessarily a liar. Moreover, the old man, partly from anger, partly from downright prostration, began to cry. The tears were genuine enough now, and caused an unlucky reaction in his favour. Plaintiff's counsel got

up, and, twitching his gown in a leisurely way, addressed the witness in accents of soothing commiseration, restored him to some degree of self-possession, got out from him once more the pith of his evidence, and dismissed him as an ill-used man, deserving the heartfelt sympathy of judge and jury.

A considerable mass of evidence was brought into court, but, for the most part, collateral.

The clergyman in high-church costume was of very little use either to plaintiff or defendant. He scrupled to make oath what was the date of the marriage, though he evidently had a strong impression in his own mind. What the impression was, the senior and junior counsel on both sides, collectively and individually, failed to extract from him, although aided by his lordship, who remarked, *sotto voce*, to a learned barrister, that the reverend gentlemen was “too conscientious for so wicked a world.” The half-caste, with the “gloating eyes,” Louis Duprez, appeared in the witness-box, and was roughly handled by counsel for plaintiff as well as counsel for defendant. When he retreated, nobody in court doubted he was a knave; the misfortune was, it was by no means made

clear for whose benefit he had been acting the knave. Plaintiff's solicitor artfully instigated his counsel to treat him as a man suspected of having been tampered with by our side. Louis would not swear to the date of the marriage; nor would he swear to the personal appearance of the mysterious stranger who had cut out the leaf from the marriage register; the utmost he could recollect, was that the man was "five or six feet high."

There was no doubt of one thing, and that was that a marriage had been solemnized; the question was—when? Considering how Malpus had been damaged by the cross-examination, the case for plaintiff was hitherto weak; Mr. Ruffhead's face, do what he would, began to be dimpled with spasmodic smiles; Beckington's eyebrow grew more arched, and he glanced with a look of calm inquiry at his lordship; the judge fidgeted with his notes; a certain degree of restlessness pervaded the gentlemen in wigs; even the jury began to yawn.

"Call Ralph Crawdle!"

The fat, dough-faced man stumped heavily into the witness-box, bowed to the judge and jury, stared at myself, and elaborately wiped his fore-

head. Crawdle deposed to having been present at the wedding, at the request of Mr. Jeffry Ferris, but could not swear to the precise day any more than Louis Duprez. This coy reluctance arose, I believe, from design ; it impressed the court with the notion that Mr. Crawdle was a man labouring under excess of conscientiousness. Then came the story of the certificate of marriage; how it had been entrusted to my care, how it had been lost, or, at all events, how it had not been forthcoming, and how—and here Crawdle produced, with an air of ponderous dignity, a small strip of paper—it was strangely and unexpectedly discovered in my house in town, after I had vacated it ! Witness had obtained permission of the house-agent to examine the premises, and did so in the presence of the agent's clerk, a young man of irreproachable character, who had no interest in the case one way or the other. The paper was discovered in a chink of the floor near the hearthstone ; it had apparently been flung into the ashes of the grate, and so slipped into the chink when the grate was swept out.

Crawdle was here interrupted by Beckington, who requested him to keep his conjectures to him-

self; the fat man bowed, with an air of placid impudence, and was silent; Ferris's counsel resumed the examination.

The reason Crawdle said he had hazarded a conjecture was, to explain why the document was begrimed with dirt; when delivered into my hands it was clean and legible. He could swear it was the identical document, by the strip of blue paper pasted to the back.

A clap of thunder could not have startled my friends in court more than the production of this document.

Malpus's evidence was shaky; his character was blemished; it was seen that he owed me a grudge, and would not stick at trifles to satisfy it. But here was something tangible. Besides, the whole story of the strange disappearance and subsequent recovery of the document, laid me open to damaging suspicions. The actual robbery of my house could not be fully brought before the court, the connection between it and the question at issue being so remote. But I am well aware that steps were taken, in an underhand manner, to put the jury in possession of the circumstance, and thus prejudice them against me.

The solicitor of my late cousin deposed to drawing up a codicil, confirmatory of the will, some time previous to the date of the marriage. It was executed in Guernsey, on March 10th. Mr. Jeffry Ferris made no mention of his intended marriage, simply stating in the letter which he wrote to the solicitor on the subject, that he desired to execute the codicil as soon as possible, because life was uncertain. Mr. Jeffry Ferris was a gentleman unlikely, in the solicitor's opinion, to know that marriage invalidated a will previously executed. The question eliciting this remark was objected to by our counsel, but allowed by the judge, and the answer to be sat down *quantum valeat*.

There was a sharp contention as to the authenticity of the certificate; and, granting it was authentic, had it been tampered with? The date was March 31. My counsel endeavoured to show, by credible witnesses, that the figure "3" had been surreptitiously added, and that the original date had been March 1. If this was so, the marriage had been solemnized previous to the execution of the codicil of the will, and the will was good.

In those days, as the reader is aware, parish registers were kept in a very different way to what is the case now. The copy of the register was slovenly in the extreme. The dirt, in which it seemed to have been rubbed, not accidentally, but deliberately, rendered it difficult to ascertain whether the “3” had been added subsequently or not.

At the time my solicitor and myself first examined it, I well remembered our impression was that the date had been tampered with; now it was next to impossible to say. Proby made a desperate attempt to demonstrate, microscopically and analytically, that the dirt and dust on the paper were the product of Welsh, and not Newcastle coal; *ergo*, as I burnt Newcastle coal in my grate, the paper must have been soiled and disfigured, not in London, but down in Wales by Crawdle himself. This was a forlorn hope, and was pooh-poohed by the judge. Groper manifestly carried the jury with him, when he swore point-blank, that not only was the “3” written at the same time and place, with the same ink, the same pen, and by the same hand, but that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to

erase it with an ivory-handled penknife, having two blades.

Beckington's speech was all that could be desired. The witnesses on my side were ably handled, both by him and his junior; much of the evidence for the plaintiff, verbal and documentary, was broken down; much of it damaged. Whether Malpus was to be believed or no, and upon this the verdict hung, was a question so nicely balanced that a juryman might, without great strain to his conscience, allow it to be determined by his personal bias to one side or the other.

The misfortune was that the minds of the jury were already biassed against me, first, by the rancorous attacks of the public press during the last session of Parliament; secondly, by the suspicious circumstances brought out in Crawdle's evidence. There had been fraud somewhere; this was proved by the abstraction of the leaf from the parish register. But who was the guilty party? Here the history of the marriage certificate came into play, and fixed me with a responsibility from which, situated as I was, it seemed difficult to escape. The jury were asked, by plaintiff's counsel, which was the most likely

explanation of the affair, “that defendant had concealed, or tried to destroy, a document proving him to be unlawfully possessed of a fine property, or that the plaintiff had forged a document, and then generously confided it to the very person whose interest it was to detect the forgery?” Possibly, if I could have convinced the judge and jury of what I myself had no manner of doubt, that the present action of ejectment did not take its rise in any natural anxiety to recover lost rights and alienated property, but in a craving for vengeance in the heart of a ruthless enemy—possibly, there might have been a verdict in my favour.

As it was, it will not surprise the reader to learn that the judge’s summing-up was unfavourable to me, and the jury, after retiring for twenty minutes, returned into court with a verdict for the plaintiff.

There was a great buzz of conversation as soon as the verdict was known, repressed whilst the judge delivered judgment, but breaking out again immediately afterwards. Beckington’s speech on my behalf had done this much good—public sympathy was divided. Many who suspected I

had been guilty of fraud, made allowance for the temptation to which I was exposed, and recognized the malice of some secret enemy. Others believed I had acted with honour and integrity throughout. However, it is probable the majority of those present thought the verdict just, but felt some degree of pity for a man suddenly ejected from a fine property, and reduced to comparative penury.

Ruffhead, in the court, and Beckington, in one of the private rooms, both urged me not to lay down my arms, but to venture another struggle next assizes. Both protested that there must be a return match, that the verdict was preposterous, the summing-up glaringly unfair, the judge a "muff," the jury pig-headed partizans.

I said I would consider of it. But my mind was pretty well made up; let the property go. Better submit to my fate than court fresh misfortune—renewed humiliation. Besides, if I failed in another action of ejectment, who was to pay my bill of costs? Already my liabilities were such as would reduce me for some years to needy circumstances.

If anything transpired—and I certainly had

hopes of it—to convict the plaintiff's witnesses of perjury, well and good. I would not venture on a fresh trial until then. So far, however, I yielded to the representations of my friends as to allow certain points of law to be submitted to counsel for their further consideration.

When I returned to the hotel, I found most of my witnesses flying like a vanquished army, bag and baggage, utterly discomfited, some starting by stage-coach, some by gig or spring-cart, but all anxious to be off. Two or three out of the whole lot stopped to express their sympathy and commiseration; they were middle-class men, plain and blunt, and I think they really felt for me. The warm clutch of the hand, and the words,—

“Tell thee what, Squire Chauncey, a' doan't think thee'st been fairly dealt with. But cheer up, cheer up, we'll right thee yet!” rather shook my stoicism.

But, as I said, most of my ardent supporters rushed away as if from a plague-struck patient.

There was one person of the higher sort who retained a kindly feeling towards me; this was Lady Mary de V—.

When I got to my bedroom, I found my razors carried off, and in their place a long letter from Lady Mary, neither deficient in kindness of heart nor in good sense, urging me to resignation and self-command, and offering to introduce me to a nobleman of influence who would procure me a respectable situation in the Post Office.

Anxious that the bad news should not reach poor Rosamund from any other lips than mine, I drove home as fast as I could.

It was dark when I reached Glenarvon. The lights at first dazzled me as I entered the old hall with my wife's arm twined round my waist, but in a moment or two I could see her face better; her eyes were red and swollen with weeping; some one had already brought tidings that the verdict was against us. Who was it?

It was Ferris himself. I was indignant at the man's want of common feeling, nay, at his down-right brutality. But Rosamund, to my surprise, rather took his part; she thought Mr. Ferris meant it kind. He had talked to her and tried to console her, and, though he did not promise anything explicitly, certainly led her to think he would be our friend. It was not likely, how-

ever, that I should be easily satisfied. I set the man down as one of the basest and cruellest of my enemies.

I have said that my dear wife's eyes were red and swollen with weeping. Yet her voice and manner were cheerful, her words breathed hope and confidence. Bravely she bore up against the stunning blow, and amidst my accumulating troubles I rejoiced to be still blessed with so true and loving a wife.

CHAPTER II.

A PANIC.

FOR some time previous to the trial we had been troubled by few visitors. The suspicion and aversion with which we had been latterly regarded in London, seemed to follow us down to the country. In Meadshire, too, political rancour ran high; my former supporters, who represented a large portion of the society of the county, shrank from me as a traitor to my party.

Now, however, that the trial was over, and I was a ruined man, two or three friends and acquaintances either called or left cards of inquiry. Folliott, the worse for me, was all this time with Lord Abermaur at Nice. Eustace Pole was secretary of legation at Athens. But the Dinders looked in upon us more than once. The colonel

whisked his stick about in a menacing manner whenever Ferris's name was mentioned, and, drawing me aside, clutched my hand firmly; then, in lowered voice, for fear of the ladies overhearing, bade me reckon upon him as a friend whenever he was wanted. He did not, he said, much understand the "ins and outs" of the law question; all he perceived was that there had been a great deal of "dirty work," and that I had been shabbily used by more than one person. A little "blood-letting" would clear the air wonderfully. The colonel breathed more freely at the bare thought of it; if I would take his advice, he believed things could be brought right even now. "There must be some blood-letting; nothing could be done without blood-letting."

Meantime Mrs. Dinder sat with Rosamund, and talked and chatted kindly and soothingly. We were always glad to see them.

Paul Muckleworth left his card; so did Sir Claude and Lady Cockayne—rolling up to the door in a grand open landau. We were on the lawn at the time, but they pretended not to see us, and gave their man a handful of cards to pass

to the servant. The vicar came to us frequently. He was of the old school, or, in other words, "high and dry;" but a good, upright man, and, though he expressed himself rather pompously, evidently sympathized with us.

There was another acquaintance very often at Glenarvon about this time—this was Mr. Moss, the surgeon. He came to visit Rosamund, who, two or three months after the trial, presented me with a little boy.

With what mixed feelings of joy and vexation did I gaze upon that sweet little innocent face—more comely, as I fancied rightly or wrongly, than is usually the case with infants! A few months ago, and the child might have been called a "son and heir," the future possessor of the Glenarvon estate. Now, he would have to fight his way through life, and make his own fortune. It was ungrateful to talk thus, and the vicar remonstrated: a warm discussion followed, leading to no satisfactory conclusion. Nothing could convince me that I had deserved the calamities that had befallen me; and as for the boy, he was more a source of anxiety than of hope or comfort. But I did not speak in this way to Rosamund. She was

for a while as happy as young mothers always are, and seemed to regard the child as a consolation specially sent to compensate us for the loss of Glenarvon.

Meantime the months ran on. Glenarvon, according to law, remained mine for one twelve-month after the judgment in Ferris's favour was delivered. Nothing new had transpired to induce me to try my fortune in another trial. My chief care was rather directed to the serious question —how was I to maintain my wife and child in comfort? It was not merely that Glenarvon must be given up, with its ample income and its comfortable home; large sums had been spent during the last two years for which I should have to give account.

Fortunately I was entitled, under the same settlement that limited the Glenarvon estate to Ferris, to a sum of money that enabled me to meet a large portion of the demands made upon me. For the rest I must borrow money, and sink part of my income to pay capital and interest.

I had been pressed, however, very urgently—not to say harshly—by some of my creditors.

They were either apprehensive of my defrauding them, or else privately stimulated by those who wished my total ruin.

One morning—I am not likely to forget the day it ushered in—came a letter from the most grasping and mean-spirited of these creditors, holding out threats of writs and bailiffs. The letter troubled me much. The man had a connection in Stoke-upon-Avon who was well known to me; I would ride over, and see if I could persuade him to take my part.

Rosamund was now quite strong and well; she was pacing to and fro under the trees on a fine, clear autumn day, with little Egbert in her arms. The fresh air tinged her cheeks to a bright crimson, and even the baby's were pink as a moss-rose.

I had been of late much away from home, and we usually parted for the day without that pang that we were wont to feel of old: it was not that we loved each other less, but that we reckoned more surely upon meeting again. Yet that day I seemed to feel the old keen twinge of sorrow at parting. I kissed the mother and child, and walked away some distance; then returned,

and bade farewell again : and this two or three times.

Rosamund at first laughed, but, easily impressed, became uneasy, and asked how long I should be away ?

“ Only a few hours,” I answered, and, waving my hand, hurried off to the stable. I had not yet given up my horses, and did not mean to do so until I should finally quit Glenarvon.

At Stoke-upon-Avon was market-day, and at the Hope and Anchor two or three familiar faces were visible at the window of the principal room. Not wishing to meet those I had known under different circumstances, I did not enter the inn. But in the stable-yard I overheard the ostler mention a name that was more than ever hateful to me. “ Sir Hugh Littlecot be upstairs. How much he be changed, to be sure ! What a fine man he war five year come Milmas, warn’t he now, Bill ? Well, to be sure ! We’re all on us older than we war ! Ay sure ! All on us.” I hastened away from the inn.

The person I sought was absent, and would not be home for two or three days. I wrote a few lines asking him to meet me when he

returned, and then directed my steps to the National and Provincial Bank, Messrs. Ferris and Co., in the High Street.

I banked there formerly, and, contrary to my inclination, had been obliged to have dealings with them from time to time. Now, however, that I was winding up my affairs, and should probably leave England in a few weeks, it was time to draw my balance and close the account. I explained my wishes to the confidential clerk, a grey-headed old man, who had begun life as an errand boy at the same bank under Ferris's father. After balancing the account, the clerk was called into an inner room, and did not return for a minute or two. Presently he reappeared, and beckoned an invitation to me to come behind a secluded part of the counter, shielded by scanty blue curtains from the public gaze. Here, bending obsequiously his wrinkled face towards me, and speaking in measured accents, he explained that Messrs. Ferris and Co., of the National and Provincial Bank, were sorry that I deemed it expedient to close the account, even *pro tempore*. That the bank would feel proud to accommodate me at any time,

should circumstances require it. That the bank would be prepared to honour my drafts to a limited amount at the current rate of interest. The old man spoke kindly, and I answered him civilly, but declined the proffered accommodation.

As I passed out, I saw through a sash door leading into a private room, my cousin Ferris's yellow face contorted like a galvanized mummy by a rapid series of grimaces: he was making signals for me to join him. But between him and me all intercourse, I felt, must cease. I regarded him for a second or two with a countenance of calm, contemptuous aversion, and then quitted the bank.

Outside, my mind a little misgave me. Why not, at least, have heard what my cousin had to say? Even now, it was barely possible the man's intentions were better than recent events might lead me to suppose. However, I could not turn back, and walked hastily along the High Street, steering my way through the usual crowd of loungers and country folk brought together by market-day. Suddenly a man, shabbily dressed like a labourer or porter,

brushed against me, and slipped a note into my hand. I called after him, but mixing with the crowd he was soon lost to sight. The note was short :—

“The bailiffs are on the watch for you. Do not return home. Cross the Channel at once.

“E. J. F.”

The trials of the last few months had no doubt somewhat depressed my spirits. It could not be otherwise. The consciousness that secret enemies are dogging our footsteps, and weaving snares for our ruin, must by degrees tell upon our self-possession; my nerve was not what it was. I read the note a second time in the coffee-room of the inn; the handwriting appeared disguised, but the initials were those of my cousin Ferris. It might be wise to trust him. Already had I formed the resolution of retiring to the Continent, for the double purpose of living economically and avoiding troublesome creditors; it was but anticipating the intended step by three or four weeks.

But could not I see Ferris? Certainly; you

can see him if you will. But what if the bailiffs are even now waiting for you in the street ready to pounce upon you the instant you make your appearance ?

The thought no sooner occurred to me, than I was seized with a sort of panic. What if even now I was too late? What if my steps had been tracked to the inn? What if I were seized on issuing forth, and led away prisoner to the debtor's gaol? And if once in gaol, when should I regain my liberty? I should be at the mercy of Sir Hugh Littlecot, my deadly, indefatigable enemy.

I scribbled a few lines for the groom to take to Rosamund, explaining that I could not return that night, but would write or send the following day; then springing on my horse, rode slowly out of the inn yard, and down the High Street, all the while keeping my eyes about me. The moment I was out of the crowd, I turned down a by-street, and, touching my horse with the spur, rode at a rapid pace in the opposite direction to Glenarvon; nor did I draw rein till I placed twenty miles between myself and Stoke-upon-Avon.

It was dark when I reached Merton-in-the-

Wold ; I proposed to pass the night there. A stranger, and without luggage of any sort, I felt far from comfortable ; fortunately, I had plenty of money about me, having drawn my balance at the bank at Stoke that same afternoon, and took care to let my landlord know it ; yet a feeling of disquietude haunted me. Do what I would, I was sure that whenever the waiter entered the small parlour where I had dinner, my countenance betrayed uneasiness. To make a good impression, I ordered a bottle of the best wine in the landlord's cellar ; the landlord brought it to me with his own hand, and I was obliged to ask him to be seated and take a glass, all the time wishing him a hundred miles off ; he was ten minutes drinking off his glass, and in the prosiest voice indulged in a succession of the prosiest observations. The weather, the market, the crops, the county races, the prospects of partridge shooting, the Dibble-dale Hunt dinner ; on such topics my host slowly descended in regular rotation. I believe, having finished his succession of topics, he would have wound up and taken his leave, but, unluckily, my spirits cheered by a glass or two of 1820

port, and wishing to appear at my ease, I hazarded a remark. It was neither lively, sensible, nor much to the purpose; but it was a remark. I said the wine was good. This was enough to refresh my host; he brightened considerably, and, with rather more earnestness of manner, retraced his steps, and travelled through his series of topics once more, commencing with the weather, and ending with the Dribbledale Hunt dinner. I scrupulously held my tongue, and as the bottle was now finished, concluded he would retire.

With a great effort, however, and inspired by the wine, my host still dwelt upon the Dribbledale Hunt, and at length, to my discomfiture, walked bodily into the subject of horses in general—a theme that seemed inexhaustible. Presently he touched upon horse-stealing; he had known some interesting cases of horse-stealing; there was “Larking Joe.”

“Haven’t your honour heard of ‘Larking Joe,’ of Grunter’s Hill? No? Well, he *was* a rum’un. Took a bay mare out of ostler Dick’s own blessed hands, saying as how ‘master’ was waiting for her at the Blue Boar! Ostler Dick says, says he,

‘ Who be you ? ’ Says Larking Joe, says he, ‘ Why, master’s groom, to be sure ; and master says I was to give thee half-a-crown.’ Ostler Dick, he loved half-a-crown dearly, did ostler Dick ; he pockets the same, and away rides Larking Joe on the bay mare. Be bound he didn’t let the grass grow under her feet ! And there Joe comes to this very identical ‘ public,’ which my father he kept for forty year come Mi’lmas, and rides bang into the yard, for all the world as your honour did, and rings the bell, and calls for his bottle of wine, and orders a bed to be aired, as bold as brass, and he with no more luggage than you could put in your eye ! Well, what did we do ? Why, first thing next morning, we sent for the constable—Tomkins was his name, and Tomkins was his father’s name, which both of them loved liquor dearly—well, what did he do, but first lock the stable door, and then run and lock Joe’s bedroom door ! So he thought he had cotched both on ‘ em at one stroke ! But, bless you, Joe was too sharp for he ! Blessed if he hadn’t a’started, mare and all, an hour afore any on us was up and about ! Ho, ho, ho ! ”

And the landlord laughed slowly and solemnly

in my face. I am free to confess I felt not only annoyed, but slightly alarmed, at this long story. Was the landlord making covert allusion to my own arrival that evening, mounted on a good horse, but utterly *minus* luggage? I looked in his face; it was stolid as a side of bacon; his eyes met mine with an expression of innocent, fat, sleepy stupidity, that greatly reassured me.

I occupied myself for the rest of the evening in writing letters; a long one to Rosamund, showing her the importance of keeping out of the clutches of the bailiffs, and advising her to remain at Glenarvon, as if she expected me back; it would put my enemies on a wrong scent. Ultimately, I proposed we should meet at her father's house at B—— in France, where we might for the present reside with Miss Cossett. Another letter was to David, instructing him to go to Bristol with my luggage, and there wait for orders.

Early next morning, I purchased some things for use on my journey, and rolling them in my overcoat, strapped it to the saddle-bow. I paid my bill at the inn, fee'd the servants handsomely, and was ushered out of the inn yard with gestures of reverential gratitude on all sides; but my dis-

turbed fancy interpreted all this to be either elaborate mockery, or a trick to throw me off my guard and expose me to the clutches of the law at my next halting place. My horse was a hunter, almost thorough-bred, and though a trifle out of condition carried me right well; pushing southwards, I rode forty miles that day, pausing only for a couple of hours to bait, and reached the borders of Wilts.

The following afternoon brought me to Salisbury; I put up at a small roadside inn outside the town. My horse now showed symptoms of distress; I was glad to have recourse to some less conspicuous and more comfortable mode of conveyance, and the same evening the stage-coach took me to Southampton. Here ascertaining that a steamer plied once a week between Weymouth and Havre, I wrote to David, directing him to put his own name on my luggage, and go to Weymouth, changing coaches at Bath, to throw any one who might be tracking me off the scent.

I repaired to a quiet out-of-the-way inn at Southampton, and avoided showing myself more than I could help in the streets, lest at that

bustling thoroughfare to the Continent I should encounter some one who might recognize me. The reader may therefore imagine my surprise and uneasiness, when, on returning to the inn after procuring my passport at the French consul's, the waiter accosted me at the front door with these words,—

“ Beg pardon, sir, but is your name Chauncey? Herbert Chauncey, sir? Gentleman in the coffee-room, sir; been waiting half-an-hour to see you, sir. Name, sir? No, sir, didn't give his name.”

Without any definite notion of what I should do beyond escaping from this unknown gentleman, doubtless a bailiff, I muttered something to the effect that I could not see him, and, rather to the waiter's perplexity, walked away from the inn at a rapid pace. I had not gone a hundred yards before, on glancing over my shoulder, I saw a short individual rush out of the inn and follow in pursuit of me at a steady trot; he was clad in rusty black, and wore a white hat with crape round it. I felt provoked and ashamed at the secret inclination that seized me to turn down the first alley, and run with all my speed any whither to escape from my pursuer.

This, however, I could not stoop to do, but, seeing a hackney coach-stand the other side of the street, I jumped into the first coach, and told the driver to drive fast to Southampton Common.

The lumbering old-fashioned vehicle seemed an age getting under weigh, and my unknown friend was in the act of crossing the road to the stand before the horses had well started. Heated and flurried, I leaned back in the coach to collect my thoughts, and determine how to proceed. Should I leave Southampton at once without returning to my inn? I had not paid my bill, but I could send David from Weymouth to settle it. Whilst thus cogitating, my attention was diverted by an occasional shrill cry from small boys in the street of “Whip behind! Whip behind!” I instinctively lifted the pad that covered the small glass at the back of the coach and looked out. The short man in rusty black was seated at his ease on the footboard at the back of the coach; his white hat with crape round it was bobbing against the little window. Meantime, the coachman, at length taking the hints given him, commenced whipping over the top and round the sides of the coach, accompanying the flagellation by

sundry oaths of an energetic character; my friend behind winced and writhed and dodged to and fro, but would not vacate his seat. How I rejoiced at each successful stroke of the coachman's whip, and wished his whip were twice as long and his arm twice as powerful! The boys in the street shrieked with delight; ladies stopped to gaze, half terrified, half amused; men pointed with their sticks and laughed and shouted as we passed on. At last, furious and desperate, I pulled the check-string, made the driver stop, and jumped out to face my pursuer, who alighted at the same moment. I had not the least doubt what his business was, and sternly told him to make haste and say what he had to say, or I would give him in charge to the police for riding behind the carriage. We were now on the outskirts of the common. My friend, rather to my surprise, instead of immediately clapping me on the shoulder and serving me with a writ, commenced apologizing for his conduct in the most abject manner, bowing and scraping three yards off, to the inconvenience of the passers-by. I now perceived that he had a roll of paper under his arm.

"Mr. Chauncey, your most obedient. My name is Gumm, sir; and exceedingly sorry am I to have been so pushing. But you see, Mr. Chauncey, we want you; we can't do without you, sir; we can't indeed, sir! We must have you, sir!"

I thought this was candid enough, and marvelled at so unusually courteous a mode of proceeding.

"If you could spare me three minutes, sir—three short minutes—it would be conferring a lasting obligation. I leave for town to-night, sir, or would not be so troublesome. I shan't detain you three minutes. May I see you at your hotel, sir? This is too public a place."

Well, I thought, the man is a pattern bailiff, and I may as well have it over at once. So directing him to step up on the box of the coach, we drove back to the inn. As soon as we were in the coffee-room, Mr. Gumm suddenly took the roll of paper from under his arm, and, spreading it open on the table before me, exclaimed—

"There, sir! Did you ever see a more astonishing likeness? 'Tis his lordship all over; from the twinkle in his eye to the mole on his chin;

never was such a likeness! Artists' proofs, ten guineas; letter proofs, five; common prints, three. Sold to subscribers only; and our list of subscribers, sir, contains all the great and noble of the land. But we want one more name, sir; one more name—and that is Mr. 'Erbert Chauncey, late M.P. for Meadshire. Ah, very sorry we all are in town at the turn things 'ave taken! You'll be missed in the 'Ouse next session; yes, sir, you'll be missed. Now, 'ow many copies shall I say, sir?"

I beheld before me a full-size engraving of the late Prime Minister, Lord Padroon, smiling affably at the public in general over a high George the Fourth stock; I thought at the moment that I had never been so pleased to see him. Putting a sovereign in my little friend's hand, I dismissed him, sore from the castigation he had received, but happy and contented at the result of his interview.

That same night I started by mail-coach for Weymouth, and found David waiting for me at the inn where I alighted.

The old man was glad to see me. I asked him whether any person had called at Glenarvon

on the day of my departure? No; none but Mr. Crawdle. He called, but, of course, was not admitted. All he wanted to know was when I was expected home.

So far Ferris's warning seemed to need corroboration, but I did not regret having acted upon it. David brought me several letters; one, of course, from Rosamund. She wrote with warm affection, though vexed that I had not asked her to meet me at Weymouth with David. She was confident the bailiffs would have failed to detect the route she took; she was young and active; she was also a woman, and quite a match for a dozen bailiffs, however cunning. As for Egbert, he would have travelled in her arms quite as comfortably as if he had been sleeping in his cradle; babies were the best travellers in the world. Rosamund hoped I would arrange for us to meet at B—— as soon as possible, and finished with again urging me to place confidence, not merely in her affection, but in her vigilance and prudence.

Another letter was forwarded to me from Glenarvon; it was from Edith Vaughan. I had corresponded from time to time with her, but had

generally shown her letters to my wife, being anxious that everything should be quite open between us. But I was rather in a delicate position. Rosamund was wont to say to me—“Be kind and attentive, but not too affectionate and confidential. The Dinders might be that, and very properly, for they are connections. But with you, dear Herbert, it is different; you ought to draw the line clearly between friendship and tenderness.” All this was very well; but where was this indefinable point where friendship melted into tenderness?

Now, the letter from Edith Vaughan, after stating that all her affairs were settled, and that the lease of her furnished house would be up in a month, went on to inform me that she had been annoyed by a repetition of those attentions of which she had cause to complain some months ago. Some foolish man serenaded her with a guitar at midnight, and flung bouquets of violets up at her window. But Edith did not lay much stress upon it. The police were on the look-out; she would soon leave Rouen; in England she would be safe from these petty troubles.

Upon my mind, however, the matter made a

deeper impression. I remembered how much Vaughan was moved when he heard similar complaints from his daughter. I felt it my duty, now that I was actually about to pass within an easy distance of Rouen, to visit her, and make arrangements for her protection.

My first care, however, was to write to Rosamund stating that on a certain day she must start from Glenarvon and travel straight to B—, crossing the Channel at Dover. I would meantime repair to the old house in the upper town of B—, and help Miss Cossett to have all things ready for the reception of herself and the boy. Winifred might accompany her, if Rosamund wished, but, when settled at B—, Winifred and ourselves must part; I had long wished it, and this Rosamund well knew.

My private intention was to run up to Rouen for a day or two, and from thence go on to B—. There was no hurry; the visit would be useful in many points of view. When Rosamund and myself met at B—, I would tell her of it as a matter of course; there was no need to write a long letter about it beforehand.

“Don’t believe half the bad things they say

of me, David," I said good-humouredly, as I shook him by the hand, when we parted on board the steamer.

" Not a syllable, Mr. Chauncey—not a syllable. Trust me for that. A godless lot, sir—a wicked, godless lot ; but we'll frustrate their knavish tricks yet, sir." And the old man's eyes sparkled with indignation as he spoke.

I slept on board, though the steamer did not start until eight next morning. I left my berth betimes, and stood on the deck whilst they were getting up the steam.

My eye half idly followed the long reach of winding coast, with low chalk hills in the distance thinly covered with woods yellow with autumn, whilst in front the dingy little town, with its formal row of houses, and insignificant public buildings, lay calm and smokeless in the early morning, and I thought that, homely as the prospect was, I had never looked upon English scenery with a fonder eye than now when I was seeking peace and shelter in a foreign land. The roar of the surf on Portland Beach came to me on the breeze ; the fresh air and briny odour of the sea refreshed and cheered me.

We were on the eve of starting, when a hail reached us from the shore; a small boat put off, rowed by a couple of men, whilst a single figure sat in the stern. My mind misgave me; had I, after all, been tracked and hunted down? My exertions, my hurrying to and fro, my ignominious devices to escape detection—had all been in vain? I could not bear the suspense of watching the boat gradually nearing us; so, going below, sat down moodily in the saloon.

Presently there was confused talking and altercation on deck; the captain was irritated at the delay caused by the boat. Then I heard my name mentioned. I was wanted. The boat had brought some one who wished to see me. I ran up the companion ladder, but instead of a sheriff's officer with a writ, encountered the mildly-anxious countenance of my servant David. My razor-strop had been left behind on the table of my bedroom at the inn. The old man had rushed for a boat, and, razor-strop in hand, put off to the steamer with all speed. I could not be vexed with him, for he little knew how my heart beat as he climbed on deck, so thanked him and dismissed him.

A few minutes afterwards we were steaming steadily for the French coast, and for the time all my cares vanished. I wrapped my cloak round me, and, lying down on the deck, enjoyed, despite the glare of day, slumber more refreshing than any I had known for weeks.

CHAPTER III.

“BON VOYAGE.”

“*Pardon, monsieur,* but might I venture to ask *monsieur* whether he would have the goodness to permit a gentleman of distinction, *en numéro trente*, to accompany *monsieur* in his carriage as far as M——? He failed to obtain a place in the diligence, *précisément comme monsieur*, and is absolutely in despair! We have not another carriage, and it is essential he should be at M—— to-morrow morning. *Je crois que c'est un militaire*, who must present himself at the head-quarters of his regiment, *coute que coute*.”

Such was the sort of appeal made to me by the well-meaning proprietor of the Hôtel des Coquins at Havre, enforcing his remarks by a wave of his hat or a shrug of the shoulders at the conclusion of each sentence.

“*Le militaire*,” he added, “would gladly ride outside.”

I was in no mood for a companion, but the request was not unreasonable. My carriage had a box-seat, and there was space there for one person besides the luggage. After a moment’s hesitation I consented, and the landlord, hat in hand, and radiant with triumph, hurried away to make glad the heart of the *militaire en numéro trente*.

The night was not cloudy, but there was no moon, and a slight mist was slowly gathering. I promised the postilion extra *pour-boire* if he drove fast, as fast as he prudently could under a dark sky, and over an indifferent road. A grunt, which I interpreted to be “*bien!*” broke from the lips of the booted figure bestriding one of the vicious, restless, rough-looking horses in front of me.

The landlord’s *protégé* kept us waiting some time. I was becoming impatient, when a rather under-sized individual, wrapped in a voluminous military cloak, and bearing in his outstretched hand a tiny paper parcel which I concluded was his luggage, darted nimbly out of the *porte*

cochère, and approached the carriage. What with his little parcel in one hand, his umbrella in the other, and the embarrassing dimensions of his cloak, it was impossible for him to take off his hat, but he bowed his head with concentrated energy, and, forthwith climbing the box of the carriage, made himself as comfortable as he could.

Meantime the landlord of the Hôtel des Coquins, conspicuous on the *trottoir*, performed a series of evolutions with his hat, implying respectful admiration, eternal gratitude, enthusiastic confidence in my amiable feelings towards the *militaire*, ardent hopes for my prosperous journey to Rouen, and general success in life. Good-naturedly, I leaned out of the carriage window, and proposed to my new acquaintance on the box, that he should ride inside.

“*Mais comme il est bon !*” exclaimed the landlord, falling back against the wall in the extremity of his delight. The small *militaire*, whose face, even in the darkness, I could perceive was adorned by a pair of formidable moustaches, assured me that he felt monsieur’s kindness deeply; he was profoundly impressed by it;

but was on the point of asking monsieur's permission to smoke "one little cigar," and even if monsieur liked the smell of tobacco, he himself could not smoke inside a carriage without feeling ill. "*Cela me fait vomir toujours, toujours !*"

So there was nothing more to be said. I cried "*Allez !*" to the postilion, who started as if struck by an electric shock, yelled demoniacal objurgations to his three horses, individually and collectively, and cracked his whip without ceasing for one quarter of an hour. Off we went, rolling to and fro over the *pavé*, at a rapid pace, whilst the landlord's hat and the militaire's performed frantic circles in the air, in complimentary response, as long as we were in sight, and I believe for many minutes afterwards.

On landing at Havre, I had been as usual surrounded by a mob of commissionnaires and touters from various hotels. "*Hôtel de l'Europe !*" I answered, with the air of a man whose mind was made up—not that I cared a straw to which I went—and straightway the commissionnaire from the *Hôtel de l'Europe* took me in tow. But an insinuating voice murmured in my

ear that if monsieur was bound for Paris, I should find the Hôtel des Coquins extremely convenient, for it was next door to the Messageries; so I faithlessly broke from the other commissionnaire, and followed my new friend.

Nevertheless, not a little to my disgust after getting my passport *vise'd*, and extricating my luggage from the custom-house, I found there was no vacant place in the diligence. My hotel being next door to the Messageries, I had fondly supposed there was no hurry, since I could send in to secure a place at a moment's notice. And thus it was that I was travelling to Rouen in a hired carriage.

The postilion, animated by promises of *pourboire*, cracked his whip, tugged at his uncouth reins, urged his horses onwards, by mysterious invocations; we got over the ground with unusual speed, yet dreary and fatiguing was the journey. Now and then there were tracts of wooded country, but, for the most part, the landscape familiar to English travellers on the frequented routes through France—straight roads over wide plains, with gaunt poplars on either side that flitted on as if in pursuit of each other.

We passed under the moonless sky, sometimes jolting on the *paré*, sometimes lumbering along the soft spongy roadside. My friend on the box smoked incessantly. At times I dozed, and whenever I woke up the *militaire* appeared in the act of lighting a fresh cigar, and the gaunt poplars still pursued their monotonous career. We changed horses from time to time, and I had to rouse myself to settle with each postilion. The *militaire* whilst I did so became suddenly invisible, reappearing at the moment we were about to start with a bowl of *café au lait*, which he hastily swallowed. How he procured anything whatever at those dreary post-houses was a mystery; but procure it he did. So invariably did he dive into the interior of each post-house, that I began to suspect he wished to avoid being asked to pay his share of the posting expenses.

The night wore on, and an hour or two before sunrise, the air grew raw and chilly. We changed horses at an *auberge*, less uninviting than the ordinary *poste aux chevaux*. Extricating myself with an effort from the coats and cloaks in which I was enveloped, I de-

scended from the carriage, and groped my way into the house.

It was a crazy old building, on the outskirts of what seemed a small country town. Beyond us stretched a straggling street, across which swung at long intervals an oil lamp or two, blinking faintly through the darkness. A church spire could be discerned in the distance; the clock was striking as I got out, with a shrill, plaintive, melancholy tone.

With some difficulty I penetrated into the kitchen of the small inn. A fire had been newly lit; the wood was green, and the smoke painful to the eyes. My military friend was so much affected by it, that he rushed out into the air with a yell of indignation, and left me alone. I found some coffee in a pot amongst the hot ashes, and this, with the aid of biscuits I had with me, afforded tolerable refreshment. My new postilion was routed out from a bed shared with two of the landlord's sons in a recess in the back kitchen that strongly resembled a cupboard, and I believe was one. To make things pleasant, I treated the postilions and another man who was sleepily helping them, to a bottle of wine; the *militaire*, who

still eschewed the smoky kitchen, followed up this line of policy by waylaying the men in the stable-yard, and plying them with *eau de vie* out of his travelling flask. This certainly quickened their movements, but from the headlong enthusiasm with which they rushed into the stables to harness the horses, I almost feared we had been too liberal in dealing out supplies. Meantime the *militaire* was not idle. First, as far as I could make out in the darkness, he busied himself with examining the wheels, springs, and axletree of the carriage, in front of the *auberge*, as if to ascertain that all was right. He was longer than I could quite see the necessity of; at last the men began to bring out the horses, and off flew the *militaire* to assist them. It struck me that he handled the neighing, biting animals, led out to be harnessed, with the air of a man not unaccustomed to the *métier*; perhaps he was a cavalry officer, I thought.

At length we were ready to start; I sallied forth from the kitchen, and settled myself once more in the *caleche*. To my surprise, the military gentleman, instead of resuming his place on the box, approached a little nearer the window of the

carriage than he had hitherto done, and, raising his hat, thanked me for the courtesy I had shown him, explained that the point of his destination was only half a league distant, and putting his hand to his heart, as gracefully as his cloak, umbrella, and parcel permitted, cried, “*Bon voyage, monsieur! bon voyage!*”

The *eau de vie* had certainly down its work well on my postilion; he galloped his horses headlong through the dark, dirty, quiet little town, under the blinking oil lamps, along the rugged *pavé*, between the scrubby little trees of the would-be boulevard, then out once more into the wide, cold, open plain. I shouted a remonstrance to the man, and for a while he slightly slackened speed. A broad white ridge of mist showed the course of the river Seine winding in the distance. A couple of hours or less, and we should be at Rouen.

Yet those words “*Bon voyage!*” lingered strangely in my ear. The voice recalled past times, old associations, painful reminiscences. And why? “*Bon voyage!*” The wish was kind and friendly, yet, reason as I would, the words rang in my ear with a sinister echo. Surely I had heard

that voice before? Yes, I had heard those words uttered by that same voice.

It was long, long ago at Sir Hugh Littlecot's, Severn Banks; I was setting forth on my return to school, mounted on the dog-cart in dejected frame of mind, when I heard from an upper window a voice cry, in tones of hilarious mockery, "*Bon voyage, monsieur!*" It was the voice of Alphonse.

All my old anxieties seemed to close round me once more. The unexpectedness of the meeting, the man's altered appearance, his unusual dress, all had combined to prevent my recognizing him; but the voice was familiar to me; the manner and gesture I remembered; nay, the eyes that gleamed at me through the darkness were his. It was Alphonse, the faithful servant of Sir Hugh, and of his daughter Ada, now no more.

Mechanically I murmured to myself the words, "*Bon voyage!*"

Faster and faster drove the postilion; the man was drunk, and he heeded not my shouts of remonstrance; down a steep decline pelted the horses, the carriage jolting and bounding from side to side, the postilion cracking his whip, and roaring

snatches of provincial drinking songs ; we reached the level in safety, and I breathed more freely. But onwards galloped the horses. Soon we overtook the diligence, and clattered by, leaving it so soon behind that we hardly heard the voice of the *conducteur*, raised in furious expostulation ; to pass a diligence being contrary to the law. On we went, helter-skelter, through the dusky dawn, amidst a perfect waterspout of mud tossed up by the whirling wheels. How would it end ? The voice still haunted me, and again I muttered, mechanically, “*Bon voyage !*”

At that instant crash went the carriage ; I was hurled to the ground with a stunning shock ; thought and sensation left me.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO SISTERS OF CHARITY.

WHEN slowly and with pain my mind emerged from darkness, and, languidly rejecting the wild incoherent fancies clustering round it, began to rally and recollect itself, my first sensation was bodily helplessness. To move my lips or open my eyes seemed a disagreeable exertion of strength. Gradually, however, I was able to examine the objects about me. I was lying in bed in a small, ill-furnished, comfortless room, with one narrow easement, and that partially darkened by a strip of matting or carpet nailed against it. On a deal table by the bedside, was a round flat dish containing *eau de Cologne* and water and a sponge; beside it a lady's work-basket. Each movement that I made caused me discomfort, so I closed my eyes and endeavoured to conjecture where I could be.

Presently, a gentle hand moistened my forehead with the sponge; the fragrant coolness was grateful to me.

Then I suddenly called to mind I had been travelling to Rouen, and, in my half-dreamy state, fancied I was to meet my wife there. So, when the gentle hand again touched me, I exclaimed faintly,—

“ Rosamund, my dearest Rosamund, are you with me?”

A voice, low and sweet, begged me to lie still and not to speak. Raising my head with an effort, I perceived not Rosamund, but a lady in deep mourning; it was Edith Vaughan. Sick and faint, I fell back on my pillow with a deep sigh. She sat down beside me and gave me some drink; this revived me, and I thanked her faintly for her kindness. Taking my hand in both of hers, she pressed it tenderly, and said,—

“ Do not speak: do not exert yourself: you have had a bad accident, but will soon be well. Only you must remain quiet. Rosamund shall be sent for. She will be with you shortly.”

Amidst my sorrow and perplexity, the sound of her voice and the gentleness of her manner soothed

and gratified me. I returned the pressure of her hand, and lay still and motionless, relying upon her goodness and her sympathy; soon I fell asleep.

On waking, I looked round for Edith. But her place was now occupied by a pleasant, good-tempered, placid young woman, rather stout, with the cleanest of caps, and cheeks of purest rose colour. She was a *sœur de charité*.

I was disappointed, but scarcely surprised. My returning strength was a signal for Edith to leave me in other hands. The Sœur informed me my carriage had been upset close to a small shrine of the Holy Virgin; it was evident that *la Sainte Vierge* had interposed to save me from sudden death by a special miracle. So said the Sœur. The hind wheel, it appeared, had suddenly come off, and, the postilion driving fast, the carriage had of course rolled over with terrible force. The diligence came up soon afterwards; I had been extricated quite insensible from the *débris* of the carriage, and carried to a small farmhouse near. My luggage, in anticipation of travelling by a public conveyance, had been labelled with Miss Vaughan's address at Rouen, and the *conducteur*

brought her word of my misfortune. The postilion, as often happens with drunken men, had escaped unhurt, having been pitched into a soft, but dry ditch by the roadside ; the accident pretty well sobered him, and he rode back to M—, muttering execrations on the head of “*ce diable d'un militaire*,” who had ruined the character of the soberest young man in Normandy.

Miss Vaughan came to me with all speed, the farmhouse where I lay being only an hour's drive from Rouen, bringing with her Sœur Angélique. Only about three hours had elapsed since the accident, but to my disturbed and fevered brain, days, nay weeks, seemed to intervene between the present moment and then.

There was now, however, a great stir in the farmhouse. *Monsieur le médecin* had arrived, a vivacious little man, abounding in gesticulations, lavish of promises. He stayed with me half an hour, questioning, examining, conjecturing, prognosticating ; the great point, he told me, was to keep my mind quiet and easy. Advice sound enough, and how often given ! but rather difficult to follow when the patient is tormented by the gravest anxiety. The little doctor retired, but

his voice shrilly reverberated through the farmhouse for twenty minutes more whilst giving his instructions to the *sœur de charité* in the kitchen below. At last it died away, and the barking of half a dozen nondescript curs in the farm-yard proclaimed that the doctor was taking his departure.

After this long visit and protracted consultation in the kitchen, I anticipated something serious ; to be bled, blistered, or leeched. Half an hour elapsed, and my expectations were wound up to a high pitch, when the *sœur de charité*, more plump, good-humoured, and rosy than ever, slowly paced to my bedside. Instead of a jar of leeches, she carried a small bottle, and with an air of gentle, but dignified authority, commanded me to take a dose immediately ; it was one tea-spoonful of syrup of violets with half a pint of water, to be taken every hour, alternately with a tumbler of *tisane*.

Like most Englishmen, this mild species of remedy rather disappointed me ; but, patient and docile, I drank it, and in an hour after meekly swallowed my *tisane*. I was allowed some broth at nightfall, and, by and by, notwithstanding my

mental anxiety, and the bodily shock I had received, once more fell asleep. All night the good Sœur watched over me, plied me with *tisane*, and sponged my forehead with *eau de Cologne* and water. Once or twice during that weary night, another form glided into the room, and for a while took Sœur Angélique's place; I knew that it was Edith, and fearing she would remain only as long as she thought I was asleep, I neither moved nor opened my eyes; in my weakness and pain, and in my trouble of mind, her presence was a source of quiet consolation.

The following day, with the sanction of the doctor, I was removed to Rouen. The farmhouse was fortunately near the Seine, so that they were able to carry me by water; but the drive from the quay at Rouen to Miss Vaughan's house shook me a good deal, and for the remainder of that day I was fit for nothing.

But why was I in trouble of mind? For this reason: my purpose had been to pay merely a flying visit to Miss Vaughan, and then hasten to B—, where I had arranged for Rosamund to meet me. But now my plans were frustrated. Bruised, shaken, suffering from slight concussion

of the brain, I might be detained for many days at Rouen; yet I had never informed Rosamund of my intention of going there.

At first I had been all eagerness to send word to Rosamund of my accident; but after the doctor had given his opinion that rest and quiet would soon bring me round, and when the first prostration of strength had begun to pass off, I altered my mind. Why perplex and alarm my wife by a letter, when after all I might be able to keep my appointment at B——?

I requested Miss Vaughan not to write, unless it seemed likely I should be detained a considerable time. Another twenty-four hours would enable us to judge.

Edith did not appear quite satisfied, and had a consultation with the Sœur upon the subject. The Sœur, however, took my part; I heard her whisper to Edith that it was best to let me have my way; to thwart me might make me feverish. Edith yielded with evident reluctance to my wish, and did not write.

Yet the consciousness that I was lying at Rouen, ill and weak, at Edith Vaughan's house, my wife all the while imagining I was safe at

B—— awaiting her arrival, fretted and vexed me. I had not been twelve hours at Rouen before I regretted not having allowed Miss Vaughan to write at once to my wife; every day made writing more awkward.

On the other hand, my excellent constitution stood me in good stead. My strength began to return; I dressed and went downstairs. I was now able to hold a pen, and write; but, in truth, it was scarcely worth while to write. In three days every one said I should be able to travel; I might after all meet Rosamund at B—— on the day appointed, and tell by word of mouth all my adventures. My spirits rose at the thought.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE INCIDENT.

"WOULD you like Mr. Parker Simpson to see you, sir?" asked Edith Vaughan, about the fourth day after my accident, as I was lying on the sofa, reading a French novel.

"My dear Edith, why? I am much better. Clergymen are only sent for *in extremis*, and even were I so, Parker Simpson's face would finish me at once."

"I thought it dull for you; and he is a good man."

"I dislike good men. I am sorry to shock you, but I can't help it. I am quite happy as I am; at least, as happy as I can be without Rosamund."

"Have you heard from her?"

Miss Vaughan evidently thought I had written.

I replied that I had not, but hoped to meet her at B—— in a couple of days.

“By the by, Edith,” I added, “to return to your lugubrious friend Simpson. Does he know I am here?”

“I meant to tell him yesterday, but feared you were not well enough to see him.”

“Why tell him at all?”

“It seems so strange to keep it secret,” said Edith, blushing. “Surely, dear sir, I ought to tell him.”

I knew she was right, but the prospect annoyed me; I should have the whole family worrying me from morning to night.

I silently acquiesced, and lay back on the sofa.

“Can I do anything for you, dear sir?”

“My head aches, dear Edith. Would you fetch me some *eau de Cologne*?”

The young woman hastened away, and presently returned with what I asked for; then drawing part of the curtain, to keep the light from my eyes, quietly proceeded to bathe my forehead. I remonstrated, and said she should make Sœur Angélique do it; the work was too menial for her.

"You did it for my dearest father." And as she spoke the clear blue eyes brimmed over with tears.

My heart yearned towards the poor, friendless orphan; I drew her face towards me, and in all reverence pressed my lips upon her forehead, begging her to believe in the steadfastness of my affection. As I did so, a shadow fell athwart the sunlit, polished floor of the *salon* where I was reclining, and a sharp treble voice, which I immediately recognized, screamed out,—

"Alia, I see you! I see you! Edith, Edith, aren't you ashamed? aren't you ashamed?"

A peal of mocking, childish laughter followed, and the intelligent countenance of Master Lollard Simpson appeared over the window-sill, and then suddenly vanished. It was too high from the ground outside for him to see into the room unless lifted up by some person outside, or by means of a ladder.

Poor Edith blushed to the tips of her fingers; I rose and hurried to the window, annoyed and angry. All I saw was the small figure of Master Lollard, skipping through the garden gate like a sprite in a fairy tale.

Edith forthwith started off to call on the Parker Simpsons. My headache was not improved by this little incident, and I went up to my room to try to get some sleep. I do not know how long I slept, but there mingled with my dreams, and at length roused me from sleep, a low rumbling sound in the room immediately below mine, namely, the *salon*; it was that of a man holding forth in gruff and sonorous accents. Presently I thought I heard Edith Vaughan's voice replying; then the low rumbling was resumed like a distant watermill, on and on, continuously. Suddenly came an abrupt pause; the door of the *salon* was opened, and Edith was heard directing her maid Janette in clear, decided accents to show *Monsieur le Curé* out of the house. It was Parker Simpson. Hastening downstairs as fast as my weak condition permitted, I called to him just as his hand touched the lock of the street-door; he paused, waited for me to descend, and stepped back with me into the ante-room.

Mr. Parker Simpson's sallow complexion was warmed to a rich bronze, by suppressed indignation.

"Mr. Chauncey, this is one of the most afflicting moments of my life! A man highly respected, an ex-M.P., of Protestant and Conservative principles, whom I was proud to have once numbered amongst my flock! A young lady, an orphan young lady, daughter of a worthy Christian, giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme! I am shocked and grieved, Mr. Chauncey, I am indeed!"

I was angry.

"Sir, you are very uncharitable, and, I must add, meddling. I suppose your boy has run home with a pack of lies."

Mr. Parker Simpson's eyes shone upon me wrathfully.

"Mr. Chauncey, you may insult me as much as you please; I will strive to bear it meekly. But Lppard, I protest against your calumniating Lppard; he is a truthful child; do not add sin to sin by maligning him."

We continued the altercation a few minutes longer. At length Mr. Parker Simpson, losing patience, dived into a deep pocket in his long coat skirts, fished out a religious tract on "Conjugal Fidelity," thrust it into my hand without

ceremony, gained the door by three tremendous strides, and disappeared from the house, slamming the street-door after him with unnecessary energy.

That evening, I wrote a long letter to Rosamund, informing her where I was, and giving a full account of all that had happened to me. I had rather have told her everything *vivâ voce*, but it was important to make sure that she heard of my journey to Rouen from myself, and not from others.

Edith did not join us at dinner that day. The Sœur and myself dined *tête-à-tête*. Sœur Angélique was not only the most amiable of nurses, she was a pleasant companion for the convalescent ; her only fault was too frequently alluding to the *Sainte Vierge*, near whose shrine my accident had occurred, and whose interposition in my favour she hoped would make me a convert to the true faith. I pressed her to accept a present for the sisterhood, and she consented upon condition I would repeat an *Ave Maria* thrice before I settled myself to sleep. At that time I thought lightly of those things ; it is otherwise now.

After dinner Edith came down for a few

minutes to bid me good-night; she was evidently uneasy and disturbed, but her eyes met mine with the clear, honest glance of sisterly regard and affection; Mr. Parker Simpson had made her very indignant; he had been unjust, uncharitable; she could not tell me more.

I breakfasted next morning with the Sœur; we were again *tête-à-tête*; on the table was a note from Edith, simply telling me that a night's rest had calmed her displeasure; she thought the clergyman meant well, though his manner was annoying. She had gone to breakfast with the Simpsons, and try to make it up; a clergyman ought not to be spoken to in the way she feared she had spoken to Mr. Parker Simpson yesterday.

Mr. Parker Simpson, was not, however, easily appeased. There were only two courses by which Edith could regain her place in his good graces; she must quit her house, leaving me there, or else procure a lodging for me elsewhere. Edith replied by a decided negative. She would neither quit the house herself, nor suffer me to quit it till I was quite strong. Sœur Angélique was with us; there was no impropriety in the arrangement; Edith had no notion of taking

any step that might imply a misgiving on the subject.

Mrs. Parker Simpson pressed her hard to take up her abode with them. "My dear, you shall have a room all to yourself, with little Lppard in his little crib to keep you company. He sleeps sweetly, unless he have the nightmare, when all you need do is to jump up, turn him over on his side, and give him a salt-spoonful of carbonate of soda, in a wine-glass of water, sweetened with sugar. Now do, my dear, think of it. As for Parker, you call him domineering, but you are quite in error. Give him his own way in everything, and he's a perfect lamb, though I say it that should not. Now try him, Edith,—try him. He will guide you with a rein of silk, and never touch the curb, as long as you do exactly what he bids you. A remarkable man, my dear,—a remarkable man."

Miss Vaughan declined to follow this advice, and returned home, vexed, indeed, but not the less convinced she was in the right. My eagerness to start for B—— increased daily, and retarded my recovery; this my friend the doctor at length perceived. It was a choice of evils, and of the two the fatigue of a journey

was the least; so the next day was fixed for my departnre, and I should arrive at B—— only a day later than I had appointed. Rosamund would have received my letters; they would explain everything; I only regretted I had not written to her sooner. Scarcely had my doctor taken leave of me, when Sœur Angélique brought me two letters from the post. I give them in their order.

“ DEAREST HERBERT,” “ Wednesday, Haute Ville.

“ You will be surprised to receive a letter from B——, perhaps surprised to receive a letter at all; but not hearing from you, I became uneasy, and, getting my things together as quickly as I could, started for B—— with little Egbert and Winifred; he bore the journey famously. I hope I have not done wrong in quitting Glenarvon before the day you named, but the anxiety was doing me harm; it is nearly a week since I have had a line from you. Miss Cossett knows nothing of your movements; she could only tell me that you wrote a line from Weymouth telling her of your intended arrival, and saying that your address, until you wrote again,

would be '*Poste Restante, Havre.*' You have not written again, so I direct this letter there, though I hope you will cross it on the road and be with us as you promised to-morrow. I suppose some dreadful law business detains you at Havre; but do you not know that the story about the bailiffs turns out to have been a false alarm? Mr. Ruff-head assures me no writ has been issued by any of your creditors! Surely, dear, you have been very precipitate. What worry, what needless anxiety, have we both suffered? But I won't scold you; only write or come immediately.

"Thursday.—The above was written last night. This morning I have been a good deal flurried and upset by a visitor, an unexpected visitor. I was with my aunt in the sitting-room in the very act of sealing my letter, when a fiacre drove up to the garden gate. We both sprang up, thinking of course it was you. But a tall, gaunt-looking old man got out. I watched him as he crossed the garden, and thought I had seldom seen a face so care-worn, so haggard, so wobegone; the sight quite depressed me. Conceive my agitation when the servant announced Sir Hugh Littlecot! I

retired directly I heard the name, but my aunt came to me and persuaded me to see him; she said he brought no bad news; this a little reassured me. The old man greeted me with punctilious courtesy, then sat silent for a few seconds gazing at me in a strange musing sort of way that made me feel very uncomfortable, though I scarce knew why. I like to speak out; so summoning up courage, I plainly asked his business? Sir Hugh replied, speaking in slow measured accents, that he had learnt from the people of his hotel, how anxious Miss Cossett and myself were respecting Mr. Herbert Chauncey; he was in a position to set our minds at rest; Mr. Herbert Chauncey was well and happy at Rouen, and would doubtless present himself at B—— in a day or two. Knowing that you looked upon this old man as your bitter enemy, I listened to him with the greatest distrust. The intelligence was at the best startling and disagreeable, though, of course, I was delighted to hear you were well. Only, could I believe that strange-looking old man? In short, I felt angry, and spoke my mind so far as to say, I was surprised he should take an interest in your

welfare—he who had done his best to ruin and crush you.

“‘My good young lady,’ Sir Hugh replied, ‘I am pleased with your honesty and frankness. What you say is true. You see before you a very sinful old man—a man naturally of passionate, vindictive temper, goaded to phrenzy by what he conceived the insolent cruelty of an ungrateful *protégé*. I am guilty. I have nothing to say in extenuation of my offence—nothing whatever. But is there no place for repentance? Old age has come upon me prematurely. My sand is ebbing fast. In the grave let the memory of my crimes be buried with me.’

“He spoke slowly and emphatically; the words made such an impression, that I think I have transcribed them exactly. Whether to believe him or not, is not for me to say; but he looked ill and wretched, and perhaps I showed signs of being a little softened, for, rising, he took my hand in his, and added, in melancholy accents, ‘And now, young lady, farewell. If I have relieved your mind of any anxiety on your husband’s account, I shall be amply repaid for the effort this visit has cost me. I have humbled

myself more than ever I have done in my life. May it be regarded as some slight atonement for my offences, and a proof of the sincerity of my repentance!' He walked slowly out of the room and had reached the front door, when I pursued him, and, notwithstanding the awkwardness of it, told him, civilly, but pointblank, that I should be glad of some certain proof that he was correct in saying you were at Rouen. Sir Hugh smiled faintly, and replied that my lack of confidence was perfectly natural; he accepted it as a merited chastisement. Then he asked to see Miss Cossett, and showed her a line or two in a letter from Rouen, which satisfied her of the truth of his statement; the letter was from Parker Simpson. I have not time before the post goes to question my aunt about the letter any further; only it seems you really are at Rouen. I direct this letter there accordingly, but shall not post it until the diligence arrives, because I hope you may come by it.

"Yours,

"ROSAMUND.

"P.S.—The diligence has arrived, and without you. I am greatly disappointed and distressed."

The second letter was written the following day, and ran as follows :—

“ Friday, B——.

“ Herbert, why am I treated thus? What have I done to deserve it? You quit Glenarvon precipitately, and, as it appears, for no sufficient cause. You direct me to meet you at B——. I am left for a whole week in total ignorance of your movements. At B—— there are no letters for me—no letters, though this is the fourth day since my arrival. Yet from others I learn that you are well and happy—yes, happy. And where? At Rouen, staying with Miss Vaughan! My aunt has told me what she read in this clergyman’s letter to Sir Hugh; only a few lines of it, but enough to make me very unhappy. I am sorry for your accident in entering Rouen; it is well no serious harm was done, but need it have prevented your sending word to me where you were? And why did you never tell me you were going to Rouen? From my childhood I have abhorred manœuvring or double-dealing; to suspect it in one I love is anguish to me; yet what can I think of your conduct,

Herbert? I have tried to forget as well as to forgive what I endured at Rouen, when I found that my husband had poured into the ear of a young unmarried girl, confessions withheld from his own wife. You well know how fully and frankly I forgave you; but how can I forget it when I learn that you are clandestinely staying at Rouen with that same girl?—yes, clandestinely; I can use no other word.

“What can I think? My mind is confused; I will write no more, lest I say something I may regret. I shall go with my aunt to Sir Hugh Littlecot’s hotel, and ask to see Mr. Parker Simpson’s letter; there is more behind than my aunt is willing to tell. The *Argus* is expected at Portsmouth; I shall write to my dear father.”

The agitation these letters caused me could not escape Edith’s notice. She asked if I had received any bad news.

It was best to be open.

“Edith, my wife is at B——, and I fear that meddling clergyman has been writing unjust and cruel letters concerning us.”

“I will go to him instantly!” exclaimed Edith, rising from her chair. “He is behaving shame-

fully. The happiness of many is at stake, and the honour of both of us. I will show him the folly, the sin, of which he has been guilty; he shall make amends; he shall retract."

Her pale countenance was flushed with indignation; she hastened from the room.

As for me, weak as I was, I must instantly start for B——. The industry of my enemies alarmed me; here in this foreign land they were as busy with their machinations as at home. My footsteps were dogged; snares and pitfalls awaited me at every turn. But surely this attempt to wound me in the tenderest part and sow distrust between my wife and myself, was too impudent, too extravagant! I must hasten to B——; nothing more than my presence was needed to nip this conspiracy in the bud.

CHAPTER VI.

WANTED ELSEWHERE.

IT was six o'clock ; a travelling carriage and post-horses were to be at the door at seven to take me to B——. Edith had been to the Simp-sons' that morning, but found them absent from home ; they were expected back the same evening and she had gone to the house again.

It was a fine balmy evening, and the Rue St. Nicholas was not far off. I determined to follow her thither, and, in her presence, call Mr. Parker Simpson to account ; in case he should still be from home, I carried with me a letter expostulating with him on his rash and uncharitable conduct.

I had almost reached the Simpkins' lodgings, when I heard behind me a quick but firm and heavy step ; turning, I beheld the stalwart form of Captain Henry Esher. He walked fast, and

bore himself more erect than usual; I gathered from his face that for some reason or other he was excessively indignant.

Without offering to shake hands with me, or giving me any manner of greeting, the captain abruptly exclaimed,—

“We have this moment arrived.”

“What,” I exclaimed, “is dearest Rosamund with you? Take me to her, dear Esher, at once; let me hold your arm, for I am barely recovered from my accident.”

I proceeded to take his arm, but my father-in-law, drawing back suddenly, swung his stick in the air in unpleasant proximity to my head, by way of a hint that I was to keep at a distance; then, looking straight at me, cried out, in a voice loud enough to draw attention from the passers by,—

“Mr. Herbert Chauncey, I take the earliest opportunity of informing you that you are a most unmitigated blackguard!”

I entreated him not to make a scene in the public streets, but to accompany me to a house, where I would, in three words, explain everything to his and dear Rosamund’s satisfaction.

“ Make a scene, sir ! What the deuce does it signify to me ? *Je le désire.* *Oui, moi je le désire.* *Je voudrais bien proclamer du haut de St. Ouen que vous êtes un infâme sans honte et sans pitié !”*

This sudden plunge into the French language of course attracted people from all parts : a crowd gathered ; I was annoyed and disconcerted.

“ Esher, for Heaven’s sake, recollect yourself ! Don’t talk French ; give it me in English, if you must abuse me.”

“ *Non, non, non ! Je désire que tout le monde sache que vous êtes fripon.* *Voilà, mes amis—voilà un fripon, un infâme !”* and he pointed at me with his stick, foaming at the mouth with rage.

He was far too much excited to listen to reason, and I thought it the wisest course to walk off to the hotel at once. The lookers on jeered.

“ *Bah !* ” said they, “ *c’est une querelle d’Allemand !* ”

As soon as I moved on, Esher paused in his objurgations, and strode after me. We walked side by side for a few minutes, my companion

silent, but fuming with indignation that had by no means found adequate vent. The sudden surprise of the meeting, the violence of Esher's language, and the pace at which we were walking, slow enough for a man in health, but for me, weakened by my accident, imprudently fast—all told upon me, and, at the corner of the street in which the hotel was situate, faintness came over me, and I staggered against an iron railing in front of one of the houses to support myself.

“Eh? Why, Channcey, what's the matter? What's the matter, I say? You don't mean to say you're ill?”

I could not answer at the moment, but there was a *café* close at hand, to which I endeavoured to grope my way, supporting myself on the railing. I struggled onwards as though treading on quicksands, and the street, with all that was in it, swam before my eyes.

I believe I should have fallen, but Esher's powerful arm was suddenly passed round my waist, and I was borne onwards almost without further effort on my part. Deposited on a chair in the *café*, a garçon was summoned, and a small glass

of cognac poured down my throat. Ill as I was, it was almost amusing to notice the flush of anger passing away from my father-in-law's countenance, and a look of intense pity and sympathy taking its place in spite of himself.

"Why, Chauncey, Chauncey, I say, you're deuced ill! Pale as a ghost! Couldn't have believed it possible. Why didn't you tell me you were going to be so deuced ill?"

Regaining my strength a little, I was able to tell him of my accident, and of my ineffectual endeavours to communicate with Rosamund. I said I was convinced some evil-disposed person had intercepted our letters.

"Well, well, come and tell it all to Rosie; the poor thing has been in a sad way. Found a letter from her at Portsmouth as soon as I landed; quite a distracted letter. I left my ship to be a comfort to her, and have never ceased abusing you to her face, excuse me for saying so, since we started for Brighton. What she would have done without me, Heaven only knows! Now do take a drop more *eau de vie*. *Garçon, mille tonnerres, encore de l'eau de vie!* Well, Rosie has been in a terrible state, and it made

me furious, excuse me for making the remark, when I thought you were the cause of it ; upon my honour, sir, I felt positively bloodthirsty, and haven't quite got rid of the feeling yet. Now let me bathe your forehead with a little of the *eau de vie*, 'twill refresh you. And here, *garçon*, *mille diables* ! put another chair for Monsieur to rest his feet on. Yes, I could have wrung your neck, sir, if I may take the liberty of saying so, with as little compunction as I would a sparrow's ; in fact, even now, if you didn't look so confoundedly ill—— *Garçon*, open that window ! Let me fan your face."

In this way Esher proceeded, at one moment eyeing me with suspicion and smouldering displeasure, at another giving me assistance with all the tenderness of a woman.

I felt after a few minutes much revived, and set forth again for the hotel, leaning on Esher's arm.

His anger seemed inclined to break out again, when he saw me on my legs ; but having once secured his attention, I was able to put the matter in a clearer point of view, and he gave way point by point.

"That's well said: yes, that's true enough; well now, tell that to Rosie; don't forget that; it's much to the purpose," and so on. We reached the hotel; I sat down in the *salle à manger*, whilst the captain strode upstairs to prepare Rosamund for my arrival; the old staircase groaned and creaked under his heavy tread.

My heart fluttered like a child's, but I strove to regain composure, and as the captain was some time upstairs, I determined to follow him. A look, a word, would, I trusted, suffice to disperse the cloud from Rosamund's mind, and make us once more happy in one another.

My foot was on the first step of the stairs, when Esher came down and met me. He was flushed and confused.

"The poor thing has suffered much," he said: "upon my soul, Chauncey, you have a great deal to answer for! There's more in it than I thought. I don't feel at all satisfied with you. There's a deal more requires explanation."

I begged him to let me pass, and went upstairs to the sitting-room, where my wife was.

Rosamund rose from her chair on my entering the room. The light from a side window fell

upon her face. The lustre of her eyes was dimmed by tears, and the bloom had fled from her cheek. Calumniated though I might be, my conscience told me I had not been free from blame in this matter; I approached her, my looks, voice, and manner, expressive of sincere contrition.

“ Dear love, you have ever been kind and forgiving; bear with me yet once more. I acted wrongly in not telling you beforehand of my visit to Rouen; I acted thoughtlessly in not instantly sending you word of my accident. But forgive me, dear love, forgive me, and I will strive to make amends all my life long.”

Though not without misgiving, my confidence in the generosity of my wife’s nature was strong; I took her hands in mine, and drew her towards me; gently, but with a firmness and decision that startled me, she extricated herself from my grasp, and retired some paces.

“ Herbert, my peace is gone—my happiness wrecked for life. You no longer love me.”

“ I love you better than life.”

“ What! love me, and treat me as you have done? Love me, and forsake me for another?”

“ You are excited, dearest; you are talking

wildly. Scandalous tongues have been at work, but heed them not; trust in my love and be happy."

She listened to me with impatience.

"Herbert, you are trifling with me. How can I trust in your love after what has happened? What, to go to Rouen, make Miss Vaughan's house your home, and never to write one line to me all the time you were there!"

"That is but partly true: I wrote twice during the last three days; I wrote fully and unreservedly."

"I received no letter."

"No letter! then my letters must have been intercepted! Doubtless it is that vile Winifred; often and often have I warned you against her; why will you persist in keeping her?"

"She is an affectionate creature; I have no one but her to be kind to me; what are your letters to her? Besides, when did you write? After concealment was vain—after the clergyman had written to Sir Hugh! Oh, Herbert! you have treated me cruelly; your love is given to another. Be honest, at least, and do not feign what you no longer feel."

She sat down at the table, hid her face in her handkerchief, and wept bitterly.

I waited till her grief had a little spent itself, and then sitting down beside her, reasoned with her, calmly and earnestly.

Presently she interrupted me by placing a letter in my hand, and bidding me read it.

It was from Mr. Parker Simpson, addressed to Sir Hugh Littlecot.

“Rue St. Nicholas, Rouen.

“Grieved am I, Sir Hugh, to be compelled, in the discharge of my sacred duties as a minister of the Gospel, to implore your friendly offices in shielding from harm an amiable but misguided young lady, and averting a great scandal from the little flock of which I am the unworthy pastor.”

Then followed a brief description of the accident that had befallen me on my journey to Rouen, but speaking of it as a matter of no great moment, and adding that, from reliable information, he was able to assure Sir Hugh, most positively, that Mr. Chauncey was well and happy ; his friends need be under no anxiety on that score.

It was this part of the letter that had been shown to Miss Cossett on the occasion of Sir Hugh's first visit.

The letter then went on,—

“Sir Hugh, I am instructed that you are a tried friend of the Chauncey family, and as such I address you candidly and unreservedly. Mr. Herbert Chauncey still resides at Rouen, with the young lady referred to, the daughter of an exemplary Christian, and one of my flock. Why and wherefore is not for me to say, but Mr. Chauncey resides there alone; the presence of a Popish *sœur de charité* can scarcely be said to infuse respectability into the arrangement. He resides there alone, without his wife, and upon terms, to say the least, of friendly intimacy. This indiscretion, for I will call it no worse, has given rise to rumours most humiliating and distressing to the minds of the English Protestant community at Rouen. Anonymous letters have reached me, severely commenting on Mr. Chauncey's conduct; and my own son, an ingenuous child, was casually witness of an act of imprudence on the part of Mr. Chauncey that filled his young mind with surprise and pain. To

kiss a young lady's forehead is not abstractedly criminal, but under the circumstances certainly savours of it. Sir Hugh, I entreat your aid in rescuing a lamb of my fold from peril, and a late Member of Parliament, of Conservative and Protestant principles, from what I may be permitted to term a decidedly false position. A line from you, Sir Hugh, would do more than a sermon from myself, and ward off incalculable misery from many innocent heads !

“ With great respect, I have the honour to subscribe myself,

“ Sir Hugh,

“ Your obliged and obedient servant,

“ PARKER SIMPSON.”

“ Rosamund, this is ridiculous. You know Parker Simpson ; we have laughed at him often and often. Is my character to be blasted by an ecclesiastical Paul Pry ? ”

I spoke almost laughingly, thinking it the best way to treat this foolish but mischievous letter.

“ Herbert,” said Rosamund, wiping her eyes, and looking at me steadily, though anxiously,

“tell me, is it true? I am in no mood for laughing. I ask, does this poor man, ridiculous though he be, speak the truth?”

“The man is a fool!” I answered, impatiently.

“Fool or not, does he speak the truth?”

“Well, I do not say he exactly tells a lie, but the truth is so coloured and distorted as to be little better. Come, darling, dismiss this folly from your mind, and for both our sakes, for our little one’s sake, let us be friends!”

I believe poor Rosamund had buoyed herself up with the hope that I should flatly contradict and disprove Parker Simpson’s letter in every particular; what I said convinced her that the letter was not utterly untrue; nay, I admitted as much myself.

Tears of anger and disappointment ran down her cheeks; she sprang up, exclaiming,—

“Why have I followed you here? It is plain you were happier without me. Go; leave me, and return to your friend!”

“Dearest, listen to me. I swear that I have never loved you better than I do now; I swear that my affection for Edith Vaughan is that of

a brother—nothing more ; for Heaven's sake, believe me ! ”

I talked to her kindly and soothingly, urging her to put trust in me. Rosamund stood at the window, troubled, perplexed, but silent ; suddenly she interrupted me, turning round and exclaiming,—

“ Promise me one thing. Promise you will never again see or speak to Edith Vaughan.”

I have said that my mind, sympathising with my body, was less strong than usual. At such a juncture I ought to have replied instantly and firmly either “ yes ” or “ no. ” In the one case I should have for the moment satisfied my wife, and possibly she herself would have by-and-by released me from my promise ; in the other I should have rebuked her lack of confidence in me, pointed out that such a promise would imply a confession of guilt, and striven to assert the authority proper to a husband.

But, as I have said, I was not myself at that moment. Thoughts of what was due to my departed friend—doubts whether I could in honour make such a promise after pledging myself so solemnly to protect and cherish his child, beset

my mind. The hesitation was but momentary, but, in Rosamund's excited state—harassed by many days' anxiety, embittered and deceived by the malice of my enemies, it checked the current of her affection at the instant turning towards me, and angered her beyond control.

Her bosom heaved, her lip trembled, she dashed the tears from her eyes, and exclaimed,

"Then we had better part!" and walked to the door with a quick, decided step.

Her hand was on the door. Grieved and alarmed, yet pitying from my heart my dearest wife, thus heaping misery on her own head, I hastened after and implored her to pause. Carried away by my emotion, my nerves shaken by recent illness, not knowing to what extravagance this gust of unreasonable passion might impel my wife, I seized her hand, and falling on my knees, promised with tears in my eyes everything she required. It was too late.

Rosamund was too much excited to listen to me; she looked at me without pity and without love.

Putting her hand into her bosom, she drew forth the miniature which had once been Ada's;

ever since the conversation with Edith Vaughan, Rosamund had put that miniature aside. She was about to fling it on the floor with an angry gesture, but, controlling herself, placed it in my unwilling hand, saying in a voice that sounded hollow and strange—

“Take it. Two miserable women have possessed it. You may need it for a third.”

The next moment Rosamund had disappeared from the room.

Indignant at the treatment I had experienced, I sprang to my feet to follow her, but was encountered by Esher; he endeavoured to detain me.

“Stand back!” I cried with vehemence—“I am her husband, and insist upon being respected and obeyed. She has been unjust, cruel, insolent; I have humbled myself to the dust in vain; now I will try harsher measures.” Esher was taken aback by my sudden energy, and suffered me to pass.

Hastening down a long passage, I reached Rosamund’s apartment. The door was bolted on the inside; without hesitation I proceeded to break it open. But the door was immediately opened by Rosamund herself.

"Return to your duty as a wife!" I exclaimed, entering the room in a towering passion.

But on the bed I perceived something that checked—nay, I might say, quelled—my passion. It was our little one, roused suddenly from slumber by the uproar, gazing with his large blue eyes in a sort of calm perplexity upon the scene. I went to him, seized him in my arms, covered the little creature with kisses.

My wife stood near us. Softer feelings were struggling for the mastery in her bosom. Tears less bitter, less scorching, filled her eyes. Now was the moment when I might have touched her heart and made it mine once more; but, fool that I was, I suffered the dying flame of my anger to have its way for one brief instant and said,—

"Rosamund, bear this in mind. A little while hence and English law will give me power to claim this child, and take him whithersoever I please!"

She seized the child, exclaiming,—

"You shall have my life sooner!"

"Dearest, I only spoke by way of caution. Do not think I would be so harsh. Nay, I am sure

the caution was not needed ; it was thoughtless to speak so."

"It was base and cruel," replied Rosamund, in a low voice, as she sat down with the child in her arms, and rocked him to and fro, gazing at me with looks of mingled displeasure and apprehension.

"Will you not try to get some sleep after your long journey ?" I asked.

"I shall not stay an hour longer than I can help in this place ; I return to my aunt's as soon as possible."

"I will accompany you ; my luggage is ready ; I shall go for it, and return hither."

"I understand. You wish to bid Edith Vaughan farewell. It is natural. But if your resolution fails, and you delay parting from her, do not suppose I shall wait here for your return ; no, nor yet at B——."

I was hurt at her want of confidence, but answered simply that I should lose no time.

In the passage I met Esher, wandering about like a huge ship without a rudder, at a loss what part to take, or what to do with himself.

"Leave Rosie to me," he said—"I'll see what I can do with her. It's really very sad. I don't

see why she should not pass it over this time. We are all mortals. And if ever a man looked thoroughly penitent, 'twas you when I caught you on your knees just now. And you are exceedingly sorry for your misconduct, aren't you now?" proceeded Esher, all the while wistfully gazing in my face. "And I say, may I tell her what you said about 'humbling yourself in the dust?'" I liked that. It sounded forcible. *Allez vous en, canaille!*" This last injunction was fiercely addressed to three or four *garçons* of the hotel, who, attracted by the bustle, were staring down the passage in mute amazement at our proceedings.

I pressed on as quickly as I could to the nearest cabriolet stand, and drove to Miss Vaughan's. My carriage that was ordered to be at my door at seven was still waiting for me, though it was now eight. I went upstairs and collected my luggage. Everything was ready, but at the moment of starting, I recollect that I had left my passport in a drawer in my room; I hurried back; it was not in the drawer; I searched for it some minutes before I found it amongst some papers in a cupboard. Anxious not to delay longer, I left a farewell message for

Miss Vaughan, who had not yet returned from the Simpsons', and drove at once to the hotel.

A note was put into my hand by the porter directly my carriage stopped.

"DEAR CHAUNCEY,

"It is of no use! Go she will, and I defy you or anybody else to stop her. We are off' for B—— by the *malle poste*; follow us in your carriage. Rosie will listen to you better when she is clear of Rouen.

"Follow us at once. I am in such a quandary, I scarce know whether I stand on my head or my heels! Who's to blame I know not, but I am inclined to think, everybody.

"Yours, in much distress,

"H. E.

"By-the-by there is a small bill at the hotel; please to pay it, as I have no small change."

The disturbance between Rosamund and myself had apparently caused some excitement amongst the people of the hotel, and the idlers in the immediate locality. A good many persons collected to see me depart; it was a satisfaction

to leave behind me the circle of half-amused, half-inquisitive faces surrounding the *porte cochère* of the hotel.

I was very angry with Rosamund, and the excitement kept me up; otherwise, I was fitter for bed than for a rude travelling carriage. But of that I now thought little; my feelings were wounded; I had been spurned, trampled upon; my authority as a husband utterly set at naught, my word contemptuously disbelieved; I was determined to bring my wife to a more suitable frame of mind, and exact from her the obedience due to a husband.

I sat with kindling eye, and throbbing pulse, and hands firmly clenched, as the carriage rolled steadily onwards.

At the *barrière* the carriage stopped. The delay would be only for a moment, but, in my impatience, this slight check vexed me. I mentally groaned over the barbarous obstructions that the authorities of a civilized country persisted in piling up in the path of the intelligent traveller.

“*Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, votre passeport.*”

I drew it from my breast coat pocket, and handed

it to him with a request that I might be delayed for as short a time as possible, giving him at the same time my card. The officer was civil. He took the book, my passport was folded up in a leather cover with my name on it, and opening it, examined the contents as rapidly as he could in a mechanical sort of way.

But something took him aback. "*Mais qu'est ce que c'est donc, monsieur? Voilà un passeport qui n'est pas à vous, monsieur! Diable, qu'est ce que cela veut dire?*"

I stretched out my hand, and asked to see it. No. He must show it to his superior within. There was delay, talking, hurrying to and fro. What could it mean?

"Monsieur," said the officer, reappearing, "I am deeply distressed to incommod you, but I must request you will give yourself the trouble of descending; there is something that requires explanation in your passport."

A barbarous country! but there was no help for it. I descended from the carriage, and entered the guard-house. From thence I was conducted into a small dirty office, smelling of cigars. I was asked to be seated; a brown-faced snuffy

old gentleman with white moustaches and white eyebrows, in seedy military uniform, stamped up to me, with my passport in his hand.

“ What is the meaning of this, monsieur ? This passport is not *en règle*. You have one name on the outside and another on the inside. *Votre passeport ne vaut pas cela !* ” And he snapped his fingers disagreeably close to my face. “ Nay,” he added, “ it is worse. There is something I do not like in it ; I suspect you are no honest man.”

Much troubled, I looked at the passport ; it was not mine ! Another had been furtively substituted for it. My further progress was stopped ; the luggage taken out of the carriage, opened, and examined ; my carriage sent back into the city ; I myself lodged in a small room adjacent to the guard-room, with a sentry before my door—a prisoner, suspected of some grave political offence.

My angry protestations, my passionate remonstrances, were all in vain ; in fact, made matters worse, for it was concluded I was a culprit, distracted with grief, vexation, and terror at finding myself arrested in my career and lodged in safe custody.

It was late that night before they finally de-

terminated what to do with me. I was carried off in a closed *fiacre* with a *gendarme* by my side, and another by the side of the driver, whither I knew not, but in a quarter of an hour was ushered into a small cell in the city gaol, and locked up for the night. I was weak, exhausted, and miserable; throwing myself on the narrow bed in the corner of the cell, I groaned in anguish of mind, and unwilling tears gushed from my eyes; the darkness round me seemed to penetrate my inmost soul, and I gave myself up to despair. But I had not lain there many minutes before my tired eyelids closed, and I fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

LEISURE FOR REFLECTION.

My dreams were miserable; all night I seemed to be pursuing Rosamund through suites of vast apartments, detecting now and then a glove or handkerchief she had dropped upon the floor, but never overtaking her; room after room in endless succession, and everywhere silence and solitude; then came the roar of a gathering tempest; the floors rocked, the walls cracked from coping to basement, thick darkness enveloped me; there were screams for help in the distance; it was Rosamund.

I woke in the act of springing out of bed in an agony of alarm, the perspiration streaming down my face. The uproar I had heard was the unbolting and unlocking of my cell-door. The turnkey approached my bedside, and with a voice, gruff

either from a cold, or from a notion that it overawed the prisoners, addressed me in the Norman *patois*. In the confusion of my sudden waking, I did not comprehend a syllable he said ; perceiving which, the man walked to the door, and made signs to some third person outside. Whereupon there entered, clean, smiling, and rosy as ever, my kind-hearted friend, the *sœur de charité*.

She carried on her arm a good-sized basket ; I seized her hand with joy, and thanked her, almost with tears, for coming to me. The turnkey having quitted the cell, closed the door, and lifted a little shutter at the upper part, constructed for the purpose of enabling the officers of the gaol to see what the prisoners were about. Instead, however, of gazing through this aperture, the worthy turnkey, doubtless from motives of delicacy, leaned his back against the door, and only occasionally turned a vacant dreamy eye upon the interior of my small apartment, whilst all the time he hummed to himself *sotto voce* a popular *chanson* of the neighbourhood.

Sœur Angélique sat down by my bedside. Her first words were,—

“*Absolument, monsieur*, there is no longer any

doubt that *la Sainte Vierge* is resolved to save your soul in spite of yourself!"

So saying, she produced a small illuminated almanac, and, crossing herself one or twice, showed me that yesterday, the day of my untimely arrest at the *barrière*, was the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. "She is determined, monsieur, to detain you in this Catholic country for your conversion. Notwithstanding, she has put it into the heart of that good *demoiselle* to send you some little comforts."

The Sœur proceeded to unpack the basket. Presently, the small slab or shelf, that served as my table, was covered with a clean white cloth, on which were invitingly arranged a cold chicken, a Strasbourg pie, huge pears, picturesque peaches, various cakes and rolls of fantastic shape, and a bottle of Bordeaux. "The monsieur outside the door"—meaning the turnkey—"would provide *café au lait à discretion.*"

Having thus taken care of my bodily wants, she placed a tiny copy of the Litany of the Virgin by my bedside, and was about to retire, but I stopped her.

"Tell me, Angélique, where is Miss Vaughan?"

"Ah, monsieur, cannot you guess? The dear young lady started for Paris this morning to see the English ambassador, and procure your immediate release!"

"She is most kind. Will you then write to my friends, Angélique? They will be terribly alarmed about me."

The Sœur seemed embarrassed. "Vraiment, monsieur, I only gained admission by the most sacred promises that I would carry no letters, no messages, *rien de tout*, from monsieur to anybody! But, nevertheless, it is a hard case. I will consult *mon prêtre*."

The dreamy eye of the turnkey began to assume a more wakeful aspect. I might get the poor woman into trouble. I contented myself with asking her to petition the governor of the gaol to allow me to communicate with my friends. The Sœur promised with lively emphasis to do her best, and bade me adieu, to return, at the latest, next day. The turnkey, whom I took the opportunity of propitiating by a *louis d'or*, having let out the Sœur, approached me and grunted an observation which I understood as little as the previous one, but conjectured it to signify a keen sense of

favours conferred, and possible favours to come. Then he turned on his heel, locked me in, and followed the Sœur, whistling the remainder of his *chanson*.

The first pang of bitterness was past. Yesterday, I was almost distracted to find myself struck down powerless, and severed from my wife, at a critical moment, as effectually as if thousands of miles stretched between us. Now, my chief anxiety was to be enabled to write to my friends, more especially to Rosamund. The imprisonment itself was of secondary importance ; if the local authorities persisted in detaining an innocent man simply because he had the misfortune to be robbed of his passport, the English ambassador would procure my liberation without difficulty. But two days elapsed, and not a soul but Sœur Angélique was permitted to communicate with me. Certain political offenders were at that time endeavouring to make their escape from France, and unluckily one of them was an Englishman ; hence the rigour with which I was treated ; hence the endless catechetical examinations before the *Préfet*, to whom I had the satisfaction of divulging the whole of my past history, my present circum-

stances, my habits, tastes, likings, dislikings, and general prospects in this world and the next.

The second day I suspect the *Prefet* began to think it barely possible I was a very ill-used man; my friends were allowed to see me. The first person who availed himself of this indulgence was the Rev. Parker Simpson, leading by the hand the “ingenuous child” Lollard. The reverend gentleman made no sign of regret for the injury he had done me, but after shaking my hand in a formal way, quietly sat down, and producing a large Bible, prepared to read it aloud.

Depressed and harassed as I was, my spirit was not sufficiently broken to submit to this intrusion.

“Mr. Parker Simpson, every Englishman’s house is his castle. This is my house, such as it is. I am in a foreign land, in a foreign gaol, but I ask you as an Englishman to comply with my request—walk out of my cell and leave me at peace.”

“What, Mr. Chauncey, repel the disinterested offices of a Christian minister! This is mere pride, Mr. Chauncey. You will be sorry by-and-by if I take you at your word.”

"I will send for you should I want you."

The man closed his Bible, and, rising as quietly as he had sat down, was about to take his departure. Master Lollard, apparently staggered by the novelty of the situation, forgot to be fidgetty, and gazed at me in silent awe, with eyes and mouth opened.

"Mr. Parker Simpson," I now said, rather softened by the clergyman's tranquil and respectful manner, "why do you write mischievous letters on the impulse of the moment? Why do you calumniate my character? Why do you breed miserable discord between man and wife? Is that the part of a Christian pastor?"

"Them that sin rebuke before all men."

"But you beg the question. Have I sinned? A prisoner in a wretched cell, with nothing to gain, nothing to lose, I tell you, no. Upon my honour, no."

"Rumour was busy; I and my wife were daily in receipt of anonymous letters. Mr. Chauncey, I may have been precipitate, but it was to save souls."

"Anonymous letters! do you not know that liars and cowards write them? There is a little

Frenchman in Rouen who would write you a dozen with pleasure, and every word a lie; it is the man who caused my accident on the road to Rouen, and has now, as I fully believe, stolen my passport, and involved me in this trouble."

"A small man, with sallow complexion, dark eyes, and a conspicuous moustache, wrapped in a military cloak?"

"The same. His name is Alphonse, a servant of Sir Hugh, my bitterest enemy."

"Sir Hugh your enemy! I deemed him a friend of the family. And this young man, this Alphonse, is he his servant?"

I assented. Mr. Parker Simpson appeared rather taken aback. His face glowed with sudden excitement.

"It may be I have been a little hasty. What you say must be made a matter of prayer. I will write to your worthy lady—I will write to Sir Hugh, qualifying my letter; peradventure it was too strong."

He grasped my hand with nervous energy. Then tucking Lollard's arm under his, strode to the cell door, and summoned the turnkey to let them out. Whilst the door was being unbolted,

Master Lollard slipped back to me, forced into my hand a very warm and shiny apple that had probably been domiciled in his pocket a week, and exclaimed, in half-blubbering accents,—

“ Eat it, good Mr. Chauncey, eat it. I bought it for two sous; but never mind, you want it more than me. It’s so good, you can’t think, and cheers one up like anything.”

So that poor little imp had a touch of kindness in his nature after all! I took the apple with respectful gratitude, though without the remotest idea of eating it.

Strange to say, the silence and solitude of my cell seemed to strengthen and refresh me; after some hours I felt equal to any reasonable exertion.

At length came down from Paris orders for my instant release, and a crushing reprimand for all the Rouen authorities, military and civil. I was escorted by the turnkey, with every mark of respect, through echoing passages and gusty corridors, down to the private entrance to the gaol; here the governor of the gaol, and the commandant of the garrison, were waiting to take leave of me.

Outside were two carriages. One was placed

at my disposal by Government, to convey me, free of expense, to any seaport I might name. From the other, Edith Vaughan's sweet, tranquil face bent forth for a moment; she bade me farewell, then directed the coachman to drive on.

My inclination was to follow, and heartily thank her for her kindness to me; but my heart told me that it was needless, unwise—nay, wrong to do so; I hesitated only for a moment, then turned aside and shook hands with the governor and commandant. These gentlemen, lately stern and rigid as two of Madame Tussaud's waxwork figures, responded to my civility with genial warmth and mild obsequiousness; we parted very amicably. In a short time I had left Rouen far behind me.

Day ebbed away, and night overtook me long before I reached B——. Chilled and fatigued by the dreary and monotonous drive, all discomfort was swallowed up in the one anxious thought—how would Rosamund receive me? My carriage stopped at an hotel a quarter of a mile or so from the old house in the upper town, whither I was bound.

The walk I thought would warm me. Fol-

lowed by a porter with my luggage, I climbed the hill at a leisurely pace; the moon was up, and I could recognize without difficulty the well-known streets, and familiar buildings, endeared to me by so many sweet associations of the past.

I reached the quiet *Haute Ville* of B——, with its quaint boulevard and quainter streets, noiseless at that late hour as Pompeii. Scarce a light was to be seen in any window, but the cold rays of the moon peacefully illuminated one side of the street along which I walked, the other being wrapped in shadow. Crossing the boulevard, I saw under one of the trees the seat on which often and often I had sat with Rosamund in dreamy happiness, listening to the musical voice with its slightest touch of a foreign accent, and the musical laugh that made glad the heart of the anxious and the sorrowful. Good little Miss Cossett was of course with us. Propriety required it; but Miss Cossett had tact—nay, I am afraid, Miss Cossett had her innocent little artifices, transparent as purest crystal, ready for the occasion. There was *Madame So-and-so*, or there was *Monsieur le Comte*, or there was the dear old

General's wife, the other side of the street ; she must leave us for two minutes to go and have a chat. Or, the skies were very threatening, she must run home for the umbrella ; if Rosamund didn't care for spoiling her bonnet, she did herself.

And I sat quiet, moving neither hand nor foot, wrapped in my dreamy happiness. That musical voice, that arch smile, those eyes of lustrous purple, with gaze so frank, so modest, those lips trembling with every emotion that stirred the susceptible heart within, that face so beautiful in its expression of a noble and guileless nature, were they mine now? were they lost to me? was there a gulf between my dearest wife and me? a gulf of separation, even if we never ceased to live under the same roof? It was impossible.

I had been unfortunate, but surely I had not been criminal? My wife's very truthfulness and candour laid her open to the arts of others ; she did not realize the wickedness of her kind. But then, if too prone to believe, surely I too ought to derive advantage from that credulity? I too ought to succeed in disarming her suspicious, and win-

ning her childlike confidence, aided by the memory of our love and by the bonds that so powerfully draw us together ?

I had been unfortunate, nay, I had been misjudging, but certainly not criminal ; yet my conscience was not quite at ease. No doubt enemies had been busy ; no doubt I had been harassed, ensnared, beset by fraud and violence ; but had I been in no way to blame ? Rosamund was not like other women. Other women it might be lawful to treat with some little reserve, some little judicious management ; but she was so true, so pure, so ready to lay down even her life for me, if need were, that my heart told me I had failed in my duty to her ; failed very, very slightly, yet still failed. And my fault had given my enemies an opportunity of sorely wounding me. If my love for my wife had been perfect, it would have shielded me from head to foot from injury ; but more than once it had proved defective, and through the treacherous flaw, the cruel weapon had entered, and laid me low.

I stopped outside the gate, leading into the strip of garden in front of the long low house gleaming white in the moonbeams ; the poplars dappled

the steep roof with streaks of fluttering shadow ; all was the same as when I last stood there, about to depart for England. Then too I was in trouble of mind, and sharp perplexity ; my heart had been pledged to another, but given away to Rosamund, a gift for life. Now, I came, shaken in health, and fresh from reiterated misfortunes, to seek my wife, my dearest wife, whose eyes, once so full of sweet affection, had looked into mine, for the first time since our marriage, with angry and bitter contempt.

From the window of the bedroom, over the doorway, shone a flickering light ; the family were not yet retired to rest : I rang the front door bell.

The window above was opened, and a face looked out. My heart beat faster, but it was only a servant-maid, who, on hearing my name, immediately ran down to open the door ; she was a stranger, but told me as I entered, that I had been expected for days.

I was shown into Captain Esher's old sitting-room, whilst the maid, at my request, went to fetch Miss Cossett, that lady having only just gone upstairs to bed. I looked round the apart-

ment with a kind of melancholy interest. It was not materially changed. The model of the "Victory" seemed rather more dilapidated, although its main deck was strewn, doubtless by Miss Cossett's hand, with rose leaves and lavender instead of tobacco; the head of the New Zealander under the glass case grinned at me a hideous welcome; the scorpions and centipedes, preserved in spirits of wine, stood on their tails as of yore in an attitude of indignant remonstrance. I sat down in Esher's arm-chair, and found stuck into one corner his favonrite pipe, smelling as if it had been recently in use. I hoped therefore he was still in the house; it would not be difficult to conquer his evanescent prejudices, and win him over to my side.

In a few minutes Miss Cossett lightly tripped downstairs; the door opened, and I rose to meet her. She did not recognize me. Illness and anxiety had wrought more change in my countenance than I was aware of; the poor little lady concluded I was an impostor come to rob the house, and cut the throats of the inmates.

There was a shrill scream, a lifting up of a pair of small hands in black mittens, a rustling

of stiff gray silk, and Miss Cossett vanished. I followed, and endeavoured to pacify her, but in vain. The neighbourhood was thrown into a state of unpleasant excitement, by cries for help, uttered by Miss Cossett and her two maids, with a bass accompaniment from the porter, who had just arrived with my luggage, and who shouted for help, not at all understanding why.

It was not until the latter deserted to my side, and helped to explain who I was, that Miss Cossett's cries ceased, and, holding a flaring bed-candle close to my face, she began to believe I was really her niece's husband; we adjourned once more to the dining-room.

Miss Cossett, though a little hoarse, and out of breath from her exertions, assumed great severity of manner. Her first words were,—

“ So, Mr. Herbert Chauncey, you are returned to the house of your father-in-law, and I trust in the character of a penitent. Oh dear, how much we have suffered, to be sure!” Here there was a renewed rustling of the gray silk, and the flutter of a white pocket-handkerchief.

“ I have come to see my wife,” was my reply.

“ Well, provided you come truly and strictly as a Bible penitent, I do not say my niece ought not to forgive you. But then comes the point, Mr. Herbert Chauncey; in what character do you make your appearance ? ”

“ Miss Cossett, take me to Rosamund.”

“ Mr. Herbert Chauncey, Rosie—or, the conversation being serious, I should say, Rosamund—cannot possibly be seen to-night.”

“ I will not be treated in this way, Miss Cossett; I don’t wish to be angry with you, but you have no right to worry me; show me Rosamund’s room immediately.”

“ Mr. Herbert, Mr. Herbert, keep under these bad passions for all our sakes, more especially as there are police and *gendarmes* within an easy distance, and the porter seems a respectable young man, who would take a message punctually, if paid for it.”

“ Don’t be alarmed, Miss Cossett; you will not need police or porters. Only take me to Rosamund.”

“ But I can’t, Mr. Herbert Chauncey, I can’t,” replied Miss Cossett, “ and I’m afraid to say why; particularly as the porter seems to be going.

Oh, please to stop him, Mr. Chauncey, please to stop him ! I am a poor lone woman, and you look—excuse my saying so—unpleasantly wild about the eyes you can't think!"

"Where is Rosamund?" said I, speaking as gently as I could.

"There, there ; now you talk like a reasonable creature. Why, to tell the truth, you see Esher went back to his ship yesterday morning ; time and tide wait for no man, still less for a public character, as Esher now is ; Esher went back to the *Argus*, and Rosamund, with her little darling, went too."

I sat down, too much distressed to say a word.

"Now, Mr. Herbert Chauncey, don't be put out ; I expect Rosamund and her little pet back to-morrow."

The disappointment was severe, but to-morrow was not far off ; I trusted all would then be well.

It was natural to expect that Miss Cossett would offer me a bed ; but her physiognomy was screwed up into an expression of inhospitality very unusual to it ; she pursed up her little mouth, and looked as obdurate as she could. So,

after lingering a few minutes, I prepared to take my leave, and, offering my hand, bade her good night. Something in the tone of my voice touched a chord in the poor little lady's breast, for no sooner had I reached the door than she ran after me, and, hanging on my shoulder, began crying and sobbing like a child. I felt half inclined to keep her company, but restrained my feelings, and tried to calm her.

"Oh, Mr. Herbert, Mr. Herbert, I do wish you weren't so wicked! oh dear, to think you should turn out so bad! oh dear, to think of such a bustle in the family, such a scandal, such a turmoil! Why, it's a perfect nightmare, and nobody seems inclined to wake us. And to think of your coming to my house, and my not venturing to give you a bed! No, don't ask it, Mr. Herbert; I daren't, I mustn't, I oughtn't to do it! As a penitent we must receive you; oh, certainly, it's a Christian privilege; but then, you see, Mr. Herbert, I can't, for the life of me, see you in that light yet; I must ask my niece's leave first; she will be here to-morrow. But I'll get a comfortable bed for you hard by, that I will. Here, Lolotte," she cried, in French, to the

maid, “put on your bonnet, run to No. 20, engage the first floor, see the fires lit, and get the bed aired. And, meantime, Mr. Herbert, come upstairs, and I’ll give you a cup of hot tea and a grilled fowl, and we’ll talk over all these miserable matters. If you are wicked, it’s no reason you should be starved in cold blood !”

With all my anxiety to disabuse Miss Cossett’s mind of the idea that I was a cruel and profligate husband, I was too tired to say much that night, and after swallowing my tea I was fain to beat a retreat to No. 20, where I found the repose of which I stood so much in need.

The next day we had a long interview. I think the improvement in my personal appearance, arising from a good night’s rest and a warm bath, operated not a little in my favour with Miss Cossett. One point gained was that Miss Cossett had a great dislike to “that Miss Winifred,” as she termed her. Miss Winifred, in her judgment, was a young person “of uppish tendencies,” and “bold as brass when your back was turned.” In fact, Miss Cossett, in confidence, informed me that “the young person was a deal too good-looking to be good.”

On the other hand, the letter of Mr. Parker Simpson had made a serious impression. Miss Cossett respected the Church; she could not imagine that an evangelical clergyman of acknowledged piety, could be duped in the affairs of worldly life; it was a species of profanity to think so. "Mr. Herbert, you are only making bad worse by daring to hint at such a thing." Calm reasoning did not move her an inch; but at length I got excited, and in rather a raised voice protested my innocence. Then Miss Cossett wavered, and by dint of talking a little longer with a raised voice, she began to regard me as a possible martyr and victim, instead of a hardened criminal. As for Sir Hugh, she persisted, he was not my enemy.

"Why, Mr. Herbert, he stopped at B—— on his road to Paris, expressly for your benefit; he did all he could to comfort us, though I am constrained to admit that his appearance is peculiar. Indeed, speaking confidentially, I should describe him as a lunatic of reserved manners and gentlemanly deportment. 'Has he been here since?' do you ask, Mr. Herbert? Only once; 'twas the morning of the day he started for Paris. Rosic

was at Rouen with Esher ; Sir Hugh left a letter for her to read. Whose was it? why one of your own, Mr. Herbert ! Sir Hugh said it was very much to your credit, and that those who loved you ought to be proud of it. "Twas a letter of yours declaring how sorry you were for turning your back on that poor Miss Ada—oh, dear! please don't look so angry! I am vexed to touch sore places, and I will not dwell on the point—but, you see, the letter was warm—uncommonly warm. Highly honourable to the writer as a man, certainly, Mr. Herbert, for it showed your contrite feelings, but awkward in a husband; because, you see, if you revoked the past, where would be your wife? And the long and the short of it is, Rosie did not like it at all. But it's time Rosie arrived, Mr. Herbert ; and I'm trembling like an asp—I mean an aspen, for fear she should come and find you established here like one of the family! Couldn't you retire, and appear casually whilst Rosie and I are conversing ? Yes, I would suggest a casual appearance, and a penitent demeanour." The old lady seemed really all of a tremor, and I returned to my solitary lodging.

The day dragged on slowly and drearily ; the sun sank into a bank of sea fog to the westward ; a wind sprang up and moaned through the quiet streets of the upper town, driving thin clouds of sandy dust before it. I waited in anxious suspense. Rosamund did not come.

Only, late that evening, the following letter, enclosed in one to Miss Cossett, came by post :—

“ H.M.S. *Argus*, Spithead.

“ Whether you will receive this letter at B——, or whether you will receive it at Rouen, I know not. Either you will have come to seek me with feelings of regret and self-reproach, or else have abandoned and deserted me for ever. If I know your nature, which I sometimes doubt, you will sooner or later mourn over the past, and yearn for my forgiveness—perhaps even for my love ? To say that I can ever love you as I once did, were too much ; but this I am sure of, that I can forgive you from my heart, were it only for our little one’s sake, and would not shun your presence, did I think you wished to be with me. You did not treat me well to keep me in ignorance of your plans ; you acted disingenuously ; you

have lowered my respect for you, and shipwrecked my faith in your affection.

“At Rouen, justly or unjustly, God knows, you were believed to be enslaved and led captive by guilty passion for another; I seek you, and, instead of bearing with the natural emotion that overcame me, you threaten to avail yourself of a brutal law, and rob me of my little one!

“I return to B——, expecting you to follow; I remain a day and a night; you do not come; the attraction at Rouen is too strong. In the meantime, a letter of your own to Sir Hugh Littlecot is placed in my hand; this man may be all you think; savage, vindictive, unscrupulous; but the letter is your own, your very own. I make allowance for the moment at which it was written; you had just heard of Ada’s death. But the vehemence of your regret carried you so far as to make you long and pray that ‘the past could be undone’; or, in other words, that Ada, instead of Rosamund, might be your wife. Well, perhaps I too should join in that prayer! I do not blame you; the moment was very dreadful; but all tends to show the inconstancy and impulsiveness of your nature. You feel strongly, but the feel-

ing vanishes ; you love with ardour, but it is only in the presence of her you love ; you repent, but the frail and fickle nature is not strengthened by your sorrow.

“ I believe you will soon, even if you do not at this moment, mourn bitterly over my departure ; yes, I am going from you, for a while at least, and I am going whither you cannot follow me. God forgive me if I err ; but I think I am justified in the step I take, and pray that it may be the means of touching and awaking your heart ; even now, in my great misery, I cannot, will not think you are wholly lost to me, your love utterly quenched, your marriage vows trampled in the dust.

“ Herbert, I sail in my father’s ship, I and our boy, this day, and shall be absent many weeks. The *Argus* is going on a trial cruize, and not even my father knows whither, until he opens his sealed orders at sea to-morrow.

“ Remember then that it is you, rather than myself, who are changed. In this will be your comfort, if you feel any pangs of conscience, any yearnings of reviving affection.

“ R. C.”

CHAPTER VIII.

KEEPING MY PROMISE.

FROM the primitive *Haute Ville* of B——, with its shady ramparts and noiseless streets, let me take the reader to a different scene.

The court-yard of an ancient battlemented castle in the centre of Meadshire, resonant with the clamour of hounds and huntsmen, enlivened by a score of well-mounted men, mostly in scarlet, about to sally forth to the appointed meet, some three miles distant.

I am seated at breakfast in a comfortable room, the floor covered with a thick and glossy Persian carpet, the walls lined with oak wainscot glowing bright in the sunshine. The walls are thick, and the deep oriel window is flanked by shelves full of the most interesting modern works, as well as books of older date, suited to my

pursuits and tastes; newspapers and magazines, fresh from the press, are heaped upon a side-table.

Communicating with this pleasant apartment is a smaller room, hung with genuine but somewhat worm-eaten tapestry, the ceiling elaborately ornamented with designs in plaster, the furniture only a quaint oak writing-table, a sofa, and chairs. Beyond this apartment is a large bedroom, a dressing-room and bath-room; there is a private staircase communicating with the servants' department, and with the entrance hall.

I am seated then in the room with the oak wainscoting, with a breakfast tray before me; I am going out with the hounds, but there is plenty of time; my horse is ready in the stable, whenever I want him, and the hounds throw off close to the boundary of the park.

Beyond the court-yard, flows slowly and tranquilly a river of some volume, spanned by a picturesque rustic bridge, conducting to an expanse of intricate shubbery, called the "wilderness;" in the background rises in dark huge masses the fine old timber of the park; the rooks are wheeling round and round, uttering discordant clamour,

watching the gathering of men, horses, and dogs, in the spacious court-yard adjoining.

I am at Abermaur Castle, and it was thus I came thither.

The morning after receiving Rosamund's letter, I started for England, and, I say it with shame, full of rage and bitterness. My wife's conduct appeared outrageous ; I was insulted, humiliated, spurned.

To London I went, and laid the case before my solicitors ; I must assert my authority, if need be, by legal measures of the most stringent nature.

Mr. Ruffhead gave me moderate counsel. “ Hush it up, hush it up. Draw it mild, Mr. Chauncey. Try fair means first, Mr. Chauncey ; fair means, not foul.” And the little man put the *Morning Messenger* into my hands. There was a paragraph to this effect :

“ The gentlemen of the long robe will, it is expected, find abundant employment this term, in an interesting case to come off shortly, where a late M.P. for a western county, of some notoriety in political circles, will play a conspicuous but by no means creditable part. His amiable and ac-

complished lady, daughter of a distinguished naval officer, deserves and will doubtless obtain the sympathy of every well-regulated mind."

"So you see, Chauncey,"—Ruffhead had become decidedly more familiar since I had lost Glenarvon—"your enemies are on the alert. Don't give 'em a handle. Bide your time, and all will come straight."

Reaction came at length; depression of spirits, dull remorse, anxiety for the future. I stayed in London at a cheap hotel, to be near the Admiralty, where I hoped to gain information of the *Argus*. My anger was fast yielding to juster and more becoming sentiments; but my sorrow of heart, and gnawing anxiety, were not the less acute.

One day, warming my hands over my solitary hotel fire, a visitor was announced, "Lord Abermaur." I was at first perplexed, but presently in walked my old friend Folliott, who, without hesitation, seized me in his arms, and embraced me.

"My dear friend, is it possible that a few short months can so utterly change us? Yesterday I met a man walking near Rotten Row;

he bowed and waved his hand. I had not the smallest notion who he was, but acknowledged the salute with an air of stately condescension. Scarcely are you out of sight when one of the Miss Belguards, walking with me, exclaims—‘How that poor man, Mr. Herbert Chauncey, is altered! I scarcely should have known him, if he had not smiled when he saw you.’ I darted off, but you were gone. And I have been these three days trying to beat up your quarters!”

I told him that, shunned and detested as I was by my old acquaintance, I feared that he too had given me up; the thought had filled me with grief and shame, but neither angered nor surprised me.

“No, Herbert, not a bit of it; my faith in you has never faltered; I stood by you as Folliott, and I will do so as Abermaur. My grandfather died at Rome three weeks ago; I only returned on Monday; now come, let us talk over your misfortunes, and discuss your plans.”

It ended in my accepting his pressing invitation to take up my abode, for the present, at

Abermaur Castle. A suite of rooms was to be at my disposal, and I was to live as secluded as I pleased.

There was an influx of visitors soon after my arrival, but I mixed with them but little. My meals were served in my own room whenever I wished, and on some days I never appeared downstairs at all. The guests were, for the most part, either from other counties, or from distant parts of Meadshire ; some took me for Abermaur's father confessor, some for the family apothecary, some for a relative of eccentric habits who needed careful surveillance. It was a bachelor party : hunting and shooting the chief occupations by day ; billiards, whist, music when anybody knew how to play, dozing by the fire over the newspaper, by night.

On the morning in question, then, I was going out with the hounds. Except for this purpose, I seldom went beyond the park palings ; it was the only recreation in which I indulged, and I believe it kept me alive. Formerly I cared little for field sports ; now I experienced a kind of fierce joy in riding my horse at everything that came in my way. Any one cruelly used by the woman whom he loves will understand the feeling ;

a broken arm, or a smashed leg, with Rosamund by my bedside, in an agony of terror and contrition, this was a vision by no means displeasing to my mind.

Some of the leaps I took over wall, bank, or brook, are even now remembered and talked over by men who belonged to the Abermaur hunt; I bore a "charmed life;" narrow escapes I had, but no accidents of moment.

That day we had a desperately hard run, and as usual I was in the van.

"By Jove, Mr. Chauncey!" exclaimed young Trnmp, a handsome lad of seventeen, who followed me over a five-foot wall on the slope of a hill, and landed with his feet out of his stirrups, and his arms round his horse's neck. "A plucky young fellow can't refuse your lead, but pray remember I'm an only son!"

"Chauncey, confound you!" roared Colonel Jellicher soon after, planted with his horse in the centre of a brook I had just cleared mounted on "Priam Junior,"—"you've led me into a pretty mess. It's not fair, Chauncey; I haven't the pick of Abermaur's stud as you have."

Half the field were thrown out that day; our

horses were nearly dead beat. Walking quietly home, we came upon some of the men who had dropped behind or lost their way.

“Abermaur!” cried one of a group of three who overtook us near the park gates—“where do you think we got luncheon to-day?”

“Why, somewhere on the wrong side of Frampton brook.”

“Yes, yes, that’s true; we were floored by the brook; but we got a capital lunch.”

“No end of home-brewed ale,” added another.

“And not a bad cigar afterwards,” said a third.

“ ’Twas your fat friend, the ex-coroner,” explained the first speaker.

“What, Crawdle!” exclaimed Abermaur. “I wonder you should patronize such a fellow.”

“Well, I don’t think I shall honour him with my company again; but you see, my lord, we couldn’t resist the home-brewed ale.”

“The fellow is rather a beast,” said another. “But I didn’t know it till I was fairly at work with the cold sirloins of beef.”

“What d’ye think, Abermaur? The man talked of you with quite a paternal interest.

‘ And so, my lord is quite thick with the Dinders? Ah, well! I like to see young noblemen neighbourly ! ’ And a lot more in the same style.”

“ And he asked most benevolently after your friend Herbert Chauncey.”

It was dark, and the men did not know I was riding by Abermaur’s side. Abermaur seemed put out, and, turning to me, said, “ Come, Chauncey, let us push on. Gentlemen, I hear the dressing bell; we had better take the short cut through the wood.” He said no more, but rode on alone.

I had listened to this conversation with some interest. At two or three of the “meets,” lately, I had noticed the corpulent form of this same Crawdle, mounted on a raw-boned hack, cautiously and demurely moving to and fro amongst the horsemen, but invariably disappearing as soon as a fox was found, and the hounds were off.

He kept aloof from the Abermaur party, hanging on the outskirts of the field, and seemingly influenced by a taste for the sport of a quiet, unambitious character. Once he accidentally came near me, and our eyes met; he instantly took off his hat with an air of great humility; it

was beneath me to “cut” the creature, and I bowed to him frigidly ; he looked as if he wished to speak, but was afraid. Abermaur was particularly annoyed at Crawdle’s impertinence at showing his face at the Castle hunt, and vowed that if he gave the smallest provocation, the whipper-in should ride over him. But Crawdle gave none ; he was modest, careful, retiring. He gazed over his woollen comforter at the scene, in a state of placid enjoyment, and, the instant the dogs gave tongue, slowly rode off. Once or twice, as on the present occasion, he had reappeared later in the day, and come up with the tail of the hunt ; but this must have been a lucky hit. As he never followed the hounds, he must have ridden along lanes and byways, and by chance or judicious calculation, intercepted us.

I say I listened to this conversation with interest ; for, though not naturally suspicious, I was fast becoming so, and regarded Crawdle as a bird of ill omen. What did the man want ? What plot was hatching behind that brazen brow ?

“ And so my lord is quite thick with the Dinders.”

Was he? Was Abermaur friendly with Colonel and Mrs. Dinder? With Edith Vaughan, too? For Edith had returned to England, and was now permanently settled at the Dinders. Now Abermaur had never mentioned their names to me since my arrival, and I had been at the Castle more than a month. It was rather strange; I would ask him a question or two about it.

But I now made a discovery that it was a very difficult thing to get a *tête-à-tête* talk with Abermaur; a formal request for an interview was too fussy; I must watch my opportunity.

Days passed, and confirmed me in a growing conviction that, not only was a *tête-à-tête* with my old friend a difficult thing to accomplish, but that he wished it to be so.

One day I had followed the hounds for an hour, and, the scent being cold and the checks frequent, I grew tired and impatient.

Pulling up on an eminence, from whence an extensive view of the landscape could be obtained, I recognized where I was; it was a line of country familiar to me. Not half a mile distant stood a square house, with a broad verandah running round it. Clumps of evergreens and

thickly-planted trees sheltered it on every side. The house was Colonel Dinder's; and here Edith Vaughan had found a home.

Edith and myself had exchanged one or two notes, constrained, short, cautiously worded; but it could not be otherwise; we understood each other, and were satisfied.

I had not called at the Dinders; I had not made any attempt to see Edith. Deceived, deluded, my wife might be; but I deemed it my duty to respect even her delusion. Bitter experience should teach us not merely to act with justice, but with thoughtful tenderness, towards those we love. Thus I had not set eyes on Edith Vaughan since her arrival at the Dinders, some weeks before, content to know that she was well, and, comparatively speaking, happy. I gazed with interest on that house in which resided one I regarded with the love of a brother, but whom I might never again meet face to face.

The cry of the hounds and hallooing of the huntsmen occasionally reached my ear, borne from some distant gorse covert on the chilly south-east wind against which we had been fighting all the morning; the sound was not unmusical.

On a sudden, amongst the shrubberies enveloping the house, gleamed forth an object that arrested my attention ; a scarlet speck, a little dot of brilliant colour passing in and out amongst the trees ; it was one of the hunt. There was nothing very strange in this. My eye, however, anxiously followed the horseman as he emerged in the lane, and, pausing for a few moments, as if to listen for the hounds, rode forward at a brisk pace. The lane wound round the base of the hill. Presently he passed within a couple of hundred yards from where I stood ; it was my kind and generous friend, Lord Abermaur.

Something restrained me from accosting him. Again did I ask myself—why has Abermaur never told me he was in the habit of visiting the Dinders? Why has he never mentioned Edith's name to me since I came to the Castle? Why this reserve and secrecy towards an old friend and favourite associate?

Perhaps there was nothing in it. But, vexed and chafed, I turned my back on the hounds, and rode back to Abermaur Castle.

I did not see much of Abermaur that evening.

There was a traveller amongst the guests, who kept the whole party in a roar from the time we sat down to dinner to the time we went to bed.

Loud rang the laughter round the oak-panelled lofty dining-room from the broad chests of a score or so of hearty, joyous Englishmen; laughter was the order of the evening; I could not talk to Abermaur on a subject that, however remotely, partook of the serious.

Next day I stopped Abermaur as he was crossing the hall, with a gun on each shoulder. Some of the men were going out shooting; they were to have a bit of a *battu*; Abermaur was in high spirits, but fidgetty.

“Herbert, you look dull to-day; I wish you found pheasant shooting exciting enough. I must get a wild boar for you; or what do you say to turning out the famous bull that won the prize at Smithfield? He’s horribly fierce, and if we donned scarlet, he might afford some sport. Oh, there they are, crossing the park! I must be off; so, *au plaisir*, good Herbert, *au plaisir!*”

That afternoon I noticed what, if my mind had

been more on the alert, I might have perhaps noticed before—a quantity of game thrown aside in the vestibule, with a card on which was scribbled, “Mrs. Dinder; with Lord Abermaur’s kind regards.”

That evening, more wine was drunk than usual; perhaps because the weather was cold; perhaps because the traveller was gone, and we missed his anecdotes. For half an hour there was no end of talk about killing and maiming wretched hares and pheasants. Then we closed round the fire, and drank mulled port.

On other evenings, when conversation flagged, and the decanters moved round the table too rapidly, I had been wont to beat a retreat to my own room. To-night I was restless and disinclined for bed.

The company grew more noisy, breaking into little groups, talking loud, and laughing louder. Colonel Jellicher, from Lincolnshire, sat next me. He was fond of hunting, but equally fond of scientific agriculture, and lectured me in a steady nasal voice, slowly and circumstantially, on the benefits of “thin sowing.” It was a notion just getting into vogue. With three pecks to the

aere, on average land, Colonel Jellicher would bet any man in the room ten to one he would produce thirty-seven bushels an acre, “ which at seven shillings a bushel, on a thousand acres, would yield ”—I forget how much. In the midst of this lecture, droned into my ear through a mist of mulled port, I could not choose but listen to two or three young men near the fire, teasing Abermaur about a certain young lady, “ icy cold to the vulgar many, sweet as summer to the chosen few.” Abermaur was not easily teased, but on this occasion I noticed he was seriously annoyed ; so much so, that when a young north country baronet, sitting next him, warned him in a joking way that Dinder was as fond of a duel as he was, Abermaur gave so sharp a reply, that the men round him, flushed though they were with unusual potations, had sense enough left to take the hint, and drop the subject.

Presently we broke up ; some went to smoke ; some to the billiard room ; amongst the latter, Abermaur. The wine seemed to have endued him with unusual skill ; he carried all before him at billiards ; the balls flew to and fro, and obeyed his cue as if bewitched. He had re-

covered his good-humour, and his light-hearted laugh rose frequently above the rattle of the balls, and the buzz of conversation.

I was almost sorry to interrupt him ; but amidst the noise and merriment, amidst the glare and splendour of those luxurious apartments, I seemed to see the wasted countenance of William Vaughan, noble and beautiful even in the pallor and collapse of death, and heard his faint, yet earnest voice, commend his daughter to my care.

Abermaur had finished, and won his game ; he stood cue in hand, watching another match, and jesting with some of the lookers-on.

I drew him aside carelessly, so as not to attract the attention of any one else.

Not thinking I had any serious thought in my mind, Abermaur, in his genial way, passed his arm round my neck, and, thus leaning on me, accompanied me into the library. It was dimly lit by an antique lamp from the ceiling. As soon as we were well in the room, I gently removed his arm, and taking his hand in mine, kindly, but gravely said,—

“Abermaur, you have been often my friend.

Be so now, and listen to me patiently, and without anger."

"My good fellow, I am the most patient of mortals! Only don't look so awfully solemn. It makes my flesh creep. If you are going to give me a sermon, let us retire to the chapel; it can be lit up in five minutes."

He spoke lightly, but, as it seemed to me, with a lurking suspicion I was going to touch on an unpleasant subject.

I retained his hand, and continued,—

"You remember William Vaughan. I was unwittingly his ruin; he forgave me, and became my firm friend; you know how he hastened to my aid in London, and died striving to serve me. He left his daughter to me as a precious charge."

Abermaur interrupted me without anger, but in a gay offhand way that vexed me.

"My dear but slightly pompous Herbert, what the deuce is the need of all this gravity? What have I done to rouse your suspicion, and kindle your displeasure? Why, one would think you some stony-hearted dragon of a guardian, who claps his ward in chancery, or buries her in

a convent! But I am sure you are ‘a very gentle beast and of a good conscience.’ So come, sheathe those menacing claws, and know, my indignant Herbert, that no harm is meant, no harm is done. *C'est pour passer le temps. Voilà tout!* I have called a few times, as a good neighbour should; the colonel amuses me; the wife is harmless; Miss Vaughan is interesting. I like them all; they don’t dislike me. Come, let us have a game of pool.”

I stopped him with more seriousness than I had yet shown.

“Abermaur, I am in earnest; tell me the truth, as an old and faithful friend. Are you showing any marked attention to Edith Vaughan—I mean the sort of attention that touches a girl’s heart, and wins her affection?”

“Good gracious, how should I know?” replied Abermaur.

“Because,” I continued, “if so, I must ask you another question—Have you any thought whatever of marrying her?”

“Marrying her!” exclaimed Abermaur, “what! an ironmonger’s daughter! You are jesting!”

I was greatly annoyed, and indignantly turned

away. He tried to resume the subject, and to calm down my displeasure; but I said we would talk no more that night, and went to bed.

Long before the gong had sounded for breakfast next morning, I had mounted a horse and ridden to Colonel Dinder's. The conviction was strong in my mind that it was right to interfere, and put Edith on her guard, lest, before she was aware of it, her affections should be engaged, and her heart given away to one who, to take the least unfavourable view, only designed to amuse himself by a careless flirtation.

The Dinders were at breakfast when I arrived. The visit was early and required explanation. To tell the colonel one syllable of what was in my mind, respecting Abermaur's conduct to Edith, would have been to set him in a blaze of indignation. I asked to see him in his private room, and begged him not to press me for an explanation, but to believe that I had good and sufficient reasons for seeing Edith at that hour.

His chief puzzle was why I had not called before; but, knowing my friendship with her father, as well as the high estimation in which Edith herself held me, he took all I said very kindly,

and rolling a chair for me near the fire, gave me the *Standard* to read, and promised to send Edith into me as soon as she had breakfasted.

It was a meeting in some respects painful and trying both for Edith and myself. She did not know who was waiting for her until just before entering the room. The pale, thoughtful countenance crimsoned over suddenly, and the clear, blue eyes were clouded with tears; we shook hands with silent cordiality. A tender regard for her well-being, deep pity for the pain I feared I was about to inflict on her, mingled with recollections of the past, and much disturbed my self-possession; but it was only for a moment; the first warm greeting over, I asked her to sit down, and then returned to my chair near the fire. A certain constraint came over us; we talked on commonplace topics like persons recently introduced.

At length, with some hesitation of manner, I approached the subject, and mentioned Lord Abermaur's name. Again the pale marble became crimson, and the blue eyes brimmed over with tears; I knew then that her heart was not insensible to the homage he had paid to her. In-

dignation at Abermaur's selfish trifling with the happiness of a sweet, gentle, true-hearted girl, left fatherless and motherless, swelled my heart and nerved me for the task before me. But first, to soften the keenness of the suffering, I enumerated my friend's many high and noble qualities; she listened; I noticed an irrepressible pleasure sparkle in her eyes, but shadowy misgivings and tremulous fears mingled with the sunshine of her joy. It pained me to go on, but there was no help. A word, a look, sufficed to give her the clue to what was coming; her countenance became suddenly changed; the softness vanished: it was hard and fixed. Her eyes were no longer tearful; the small mouth was rigidly closed.

What could I say to console her? I took her hand, and, silently pressing it in mine, waited until the grievous anguish of her trouble had abated. At last, in a low, stern voice, as if fearing lest to speak might rob her of her self-command, she asked,

“What would you wish me to do?”

“Edith, your own nobleness of mind and purity of heart will direct you. It is better you should

not seek counsel of me. Trust to yourself; you can find no truer guide."

My looks, and the accents of my voice, showed how deeply I felt for her; yet, at first, I am not sure she was thankful to me for undeceiving her; she asked me some questions; I replied guardedly, but in a way sufficiently explicit to make her understand the position in which she was placed. She turned from me suddenly, saying,—

"Wait for me, if possible, a few minutes. I am not able to speak, or act, or think as I ought. Bear with me. I shall be better soon."

She left the room, and did not return for half an hour.

The rigid look had left her countenance; she was very sad, but the sadness was now almost gentle and calm. There was a letter in her hand unsealed, and, handing it to me, she said,—

"Read it, dear friend, and tell me if you approve. I have prayed for help, and help has been given me. I am thankful for your kindness; you have done what was right, and may Heaven bless you for it!"

She turned away to the window, whilst I glanced at the letter.

It was grave, firm, dignified, yet not divested of a certain irrepressible tenderness that showed what was in her heart. Edith commanded him never to see her more. She had been weak and presumptuous enough to think that he cared for her ; she was not ashamed to own it ; but his conduct proved him unworthy of her regard, and mitigated the sorrow she would otherwise have felt in parting.

I gave her the letter to seal ; it was possible that, on receiving it, Abermaur's better feelings would be roused. There was at least no question, that, in acting thus, Edith was obeying the instincts of maidenly pride and self-respect.

We parted in sadness but with much affection. On reaching the castle, I asked for Lord Abermaur ; he was out shooting. Going up to my room, I quietly proceeded to get my things together, and prepare for taking my departure from the castle ; of course, this might not prove necessary, but it was a contingency I could not keep out of sight. By and by a message was sent up to me to say, his lordship had returned, and was writing letters in the library.

As soon as I entered the room, Abermaur rose,

and, gaily extending both hands to me, asked forgiveness for his foolish talk of the night before ; he had been thoughtless, unfeeling ; he felt quite ashamed of himself.

The pleasure this reception gave me was soon damped when I found his apologies had reference rather to the manner, than the matter of his conversation.

I told him therefore where I had been that morning.

His handsome, effeminate face quivered with anger.

“ What ! you have seen Edith ? you have told her what I said last night ? Herbert, I could not have believed you capable of such meanness, such treachery ! ”

I told him calmly I had felt it my duty to put Edith on her guard against him ; I should have acted the same towards my own brother ; he would thank me one day for what I had done.

I then gave him the letter. He read it, and was furious. I should scarcely have recognized him to be the same man.

“ I tell you what, sir,” he exclaimed, with an oath—“ if you had not once been my friend, and

were not now my guest, I would give you such a lesson as you would not soon forget. How dare you, sir, interfere between Edith and myself? You are a prying, impertinent, mischief-making spy, and I could shoot you like a dog!"

Abermaur hardly knew what he was saying. Storming about the room, he would sometimes insult me with words and gestures, sometimes read over the letter, and wring his hands with grief and vexation. It was useless to reason with him. Quietly I left the library, and returned to my own room; there I waited half an hour in the hope that Abermaur would come to me or send for me; but he did not, and I no longer hesitated what course to take.

I wrote a note to him, justifying my conduct; then descended from my room by the private staircase, found my way to the stable, and, procuring a conveyance, bade adieu forthwith to Abermaur Castle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RETURN OF THE "ARGUS."

It was with a strange feeling of bewilderment that I paced once more the smooth lawns and shady pathways of Glenarvon, and listened to the echoes of my footsteps in the vacant passages and desolate apartments of the tenantless mansion. I could scarce realize the fact that the house and estate were no longer mine; nay, that the very furniture round me, and the very cattle and sheep feeding on the meadows, were not mine, for I had purchased them out of funds lawfully belonging to another.

Winter robbed the landscape of some of its charms, but the grand old trees were beautiful even in their nakedness, the brook, swollen by recent rains, rushed on its course with a hoarser murmur, the belts and clumps of laurel and

laurustinus sheltering the garden, glistened bright and glossy in the sunshine; far off, the thickly congregated woods enriched the valley with tints of hazy purple and brown; and, farther still, rose in bold outline the blue mountains so often gazed upon in peace and happiness, standing by the side of her whom I loved with a love never appreciated until now.

It mattered little to me whether the mansion and broad acres were mine or not, if my life were to be passed in solitude.

I had come to Glenarvon to make arrangements for handing over the property to the successful claimant, my cousin Ferris. It was necessary to collect books and other articles that were *bonâ fide* my own property, and remove them; the aggregate value was small, but the things were worth preserving for old association sake; a box or two contained all, and old David, who had a little cottage of his own where he intended passing the remainder of his days, undertook to take charge of them.

" You will come back here some day, sir. Mark my words. You will come back, and my lady too, and there will be grand doings, though

maybe I shall be in my cold grave. Why, it's in Scripture, sir—'I have been young, and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken.' Yes, sir, that's Scripture, and 'twill come true, sir. Surely, surely, it must, sir."

I did not feel myself strictly entitled to the appellation of "righteous;" indeed, I suspect David's own ideas on the point were vague, but the old man's words were kind and cheery, and I was the better for them.

My arrangements were completed by mid-day, and David went to inquire after my solitary mutton-chop, that a solitary maid was cooking in the huge old kitchen, where endless droves of cattle, myriads of sheep, countless feathered fowl, had revolved upon the burnished spit, or yielded up their juices in the simmering stew-pan, under the vigilant eye of a long succession of cooks now mouldering in mother earth.

I heard carriage wheels in the distant road, and went to the window; a postchaise, bespattered with mud, was entering the lodge-gates; it drove up to the front entrance at a rapid pace, the horses half blown. With beating heart I ran

out of the library, crossed the hall, almost fell on my face on the slippery oak floor in the excitement of the moment, and at the entrance door found myself in the arms of Captain Esher.

"Chauncey," he exclaimed, "are Rosamund and the boy here?"

"Good Heavens, no. I hoped you had brought them!"

For a moment we both stood opposite each other, in the entrance passage, alarmed and confounded. Recovering myself, I seized Esher's arm, and, taking him to the library, cried—

"Esher, for Heaven's sake, explain. Tell me what is the matter."

"It was all that confounded lawyer's letter," he replied, striding up and down the room, and occasionally upsetting a chair or other article of furniture that impeded his movements—"that confounded letter! The dear girl was coming home full of hope and gladness and ready to forgive and forget everything. We had a splendid run; she and the boy are famous sailors; and a beautiful pair they were. Rosie would have flown to you as merry as a bird; then comes that damnable letter. For shame, Chauncey, for

shame! You have spoiled all. Where she has gone, Heaven only knows!"

"Lawyer's letter! I sent no lawyer's letter. I would have written, but where the *Argus* would first touch none could tell me; I know nothing of lawyers' letters."

"What!" continued Esher, coming close up to me, and, in a half-paternal and half-menacing fashion, seizing me firmly by the collar, "you sent no lawyer's letter—no letter threatening legal proceedings — no letter informing Rosie you should claim the custody of the child? Now, sir, on your honour as a gentleman—no letter?"

I gently removed Captain Esher's hand from my collar; then sat down on the nearest chair, chilled to the heart with grief and alarm. My enemy's handiwork was again visible. Esher took a chair by me.

"Why do you meddle with lawyers? If you had not got amongst those land-sharks, I don't know but what this fine house might not still be yours—at least, that's my private opinion. And as for Rosie! bless you, man, d'ye think you can bully and crush her by lawyers' letters? Don't you know her better? You have played the

very mischief with her, and that's the long and the short of it!"

"On my honour, I know nothing of any lawyer's letter!"

"On your honour? You say on your honour? —then I'm satisfied. Give me your hand, Chauncey. But who the devil sent the letter?"

It was enclosed amongst letters and despatches in a packet from the Admiralty received by Esher within an hour from the arrival of the *Argus* off Plymouth; whoever had contrived this wicked fraud must have friends at the Admiralty; as for me, I had none. Esher handed the letter to Rosamund, as a matter of course, and then, in haste to see the admiral, put off for shore. On returning, Rosamund was gone; she had left the ship with the child and Winifred. A note, hastily written, was found on the table of Esher's cabin; in it Rosamund gave the substance of this letter, and bitterly complained of the cruelty of the contents.

"I shall keep out of my husband's reach, and live in retirement. I hoped he would have welcomed me in a spirit of kindness and conciliation. But what does he do? he hires lawyers, and

threatens to drag me home to his arms, as if I were an escaped convict; or failing that to tear my little one from me! If I did wrong to sail with you, at least, the provocation was strong; but his heart is hardened, hopelessly hardened against me. I shall keep out of his reach, and pray that he may be brought to a better mind, for his own sake and the child's."

"Could you find no trace of them?" I asked.
"Have you no notion of the route they took?"

"Trace them! Half my crew scoured the port till midnight. But Plymouth is a large place, and the lads had just landed, and were ripe for a spree; we didn't muster strong at roll-call next morning. Trace them? yes, I was on their track as far as Exeter; then I lost the whole lot, and drifted to and fro for six blessed hours, without rudder or compass, till something whispered in my ear, 'What if the girl hasn't run for shore after all? Go to Glenarvon!' And here I am; and much good it has done me!"

The captain took off his cap and cloak, brushed his dishevelled gray hair off his forehead, turned his chair to the fire, and, putting his feet on the

fender, sat warming his hands in silence ; his face the picture of perplexity and despair.

David now made his appearance with my solitary mutton-chop reinforced by a large dish of eggs and bacon. The wine cellar was well stocked, and, though in strict law the contents were perhaps another's, I did not scruple to order a bottle of cousin Jeffry's celebrated Burgundy.

"Come, Esher, we both of us need refreshment; let me help you."

The old man indignantly rejected the invitation.

"It's true that not a morsel has crossed my lips for the last twelve hours ; but my heart is too full. Don't ask me, Chauncey. I have done with eating and drinking."

Nevertheless, Captain Esher, whilst giving vent to these remarks, was pushing his chair nearer the table, and, before he finished speaking, helped himself to an unlimited quantity of eggs and bacon. "It's merely mechanical," added the captain, tossing off half a tumbler of Burgundy. "I don't know what I'm doing. And it don't much matter. I'm looking forward to bedtime ;

that's my only comfort. Then I can go to sleep and dream of other things. What a mockery is life!" and he helped himself to another rasher, and some more Burgundy. "Here have I been groaning and yearning, and grumbling after a ship for twenty years. And now I've got my ship, what's the good? It can't cure a broken heart, Chauncey, can it? Not but what I love the *Argus*—she's a real beauty. I say, this Burgundy is not bad; Chauncey, good luck to you. Cheer up, better times are coming; you mustn't bed own-hearted; that's your failing, I know; but take my word for it, Chauncey, pluck and patience will carry a man through the heaviest sea. Come along, Chauncey, help yourself and pass the bottle. Rosie will come round, that she will; she will swing with the tide. Bless the little craft, I love her, though she has her queer points; but so have we all, so have we all! Upon my word, Chauncey, your lunch has done me a deal of good; come, shake hands! We will stand by one another, rain or sunshine, fair or foul, won't we, Chauncey?"

I had not, however, the benefit of Captain Esher's counsel and support much longer. He

was bound to return to his ship ; she being under peremptory orders to sail for Malta the next day. So Esher had to start to Plymouth as soon as his post-horses had eaten a feed of corn and recovered their wind.

As for myself, I saw nothing for it but to accompany him as far as Exeter, and there endeavour to recover the clue to my wife's movements which he had lost. Whilst the captain lay down on the sofa and took a nap—for he had not slept since the *Argus* dropped anchor in Plymouth Bay—I sallied forth into the grounds, and walked to and fro, in much excitement, inhaling, almost thirstily, the keen frosty air. I wandered into the park, and, scarcely knowing it, approached the paling that fenced it from the main road. Hearing voices, I looked into the road, and much to my annoyance encountered, at the identical moment, the dreamy physiognomy of Miss Isabella Ferris. Miss Isabella was on horseback, and the moment she recognized me, drew back with an abruptness that startled the sober animal she rode, and made the large black feather in her hat wave like a funeral plume.

“ Oh, Mr. Chauncey, how you startled me !

Forgive this unwonted, and apparently indelicate intrusion. Have you seen papa?"

I coldly replied in the negative, and bowing, was about to withdraw. I was disgusted at the greedy anxiety with which the Ferrises hastened to reconnoitre the property wrested from my hands and handed over to theirs by the caprice of the law. They might have restrained their eagerness until I was fairly out of the house.

But Isabella begged me to wait a few moments.

" You see, Mr. Chauncey, I have much to say; but it is exceedingly difficult to talk appropriately and feelingly over a park paling. The attitude not only impedes the flow of my ideas, but slightly strains the muscles of my neck. There is a postern yonder: could you not emerge from the park, and come within a confidential distance?"

I rather reluctantly complied, and as soon as I was by her side, Miss Ferris leaned forwards, stretched out her hand, and began to cry.

I took her hand, which closed on mine with a vehemence quite contrary to the established maxims of feminine etiquette. For a few moments neither spoke; seeing that her agitation

was genuine, I let her tears flow without interruption.

At last she sobbed out,—

“Mr. Chauncey, you are very good to shake hands with me. I thought, ‘though we had been friends in youth,’ we should now be severed like cliffs that had been rent asunder! You are very good not to spurn me; I feel a monster of treachery and ingratitude; so does my dear papa; yes, and my sister begins to suspect she is one, which is a step in the right direction; we are certainly monsters. After all your kindness, and saving my papa’s life too; oh, it is too bad! I don’t understand it; no, of course not. At first the mystery was exciting; but now it fades into the light of common day, and I feel that we are a family of genteel burglars walking into property belonging to some one else. It goes to my heart —oh, dear, I beg your pardon”—here three or four tears fell on my ungloved hand;—“these accidents will happen. May I trouble you to pick up my pocket-handkerchief. Thank you—thank you.” She wiped her eyes, and I began to console her as well as I could; but she resumed directly.

"Thank you; but I fear that's only 'flattering unction.' It won't do, cousin; I can't look you in the face for very shame. But don't think we came, Ahab-like, to look at our ill-gotten land. No. Papa wants you; has a word or two of great consequence to say to you; but he daren't ride up to the door, lest it should come to the ears of the enemy. Quiet, Hotspur, quiet!" This was to her horse, the mildest of Hotspurs.

"What enemy?"

"Oh, you can guess, surely? Well, papa has a craving to see you, so we rode this way on the chance of meeting you. He went on towards the lodge, and I promised to keep watch here, and give the alarm if I should see any one coming. There are spies all round, and we are bound to be on our guard. 'I hear a voice in every wind; ' we cannot be too careful!"

She glanced nervously round, for "Hotspur" pricked his ears with an air of sober expectation, as the sound of another horse was heard approaching along the road. Through the gathering mist of evening, I saw a familiar form on a stout cob, cautiously trotting towards us.

It was Ferris, enveloped in a cloak, out of which his thin inquisitive face emerged, like a weasel's from a gorse-bush.

Scarcely understanding the state of affairs, I stepped to one side. Isabella waved her hand-kerchief, wet with tears, towards me, and Ferris suddenly pulled up.

"Cousin Chauncey, you see before you a very unhappy old man. Don't look so angry; I can't help myself; I am a tool—a poor, dirty tool. I can't call my soul my own, though, by-the-by, I have a pretty shrewd notion whose it is."

I could not listen with patience to what seemed mere hypocritical whining, and turned away in disgust.

"Cousin, don't despise me," continued Ferris, lowering his voice. "If it were not for my daughters, I would set them all at defiance. But I can't abide that my girls should find out that their father was—well, I can't say what. Now listen, cousin; I have a word to say about your poor dear wife."

When he named her, my manner changed. I turned pale from very eagerness.

"Nay, nay; don't expect too much. Bless

her, she is a sweet, honest creature! Nay, be patient, cousin. Do I know where she is? Not exactly: if I did I would tell you, even though he—you know whom I mean—carried out his threats, and exposed me to the whole world; but, cousin, dear cousin, I can give you a little clue. Oh, good gracious me! who's that?"

It was only two or three labouring men plodding home from work, and, as soon as they had passed, Ferris protruded his face from the cloak in which, at their approach, he had enveloped it, and again went on,—

"Cousin, I can give you a clue." He pushed his cob nearer to me, and in a whisper said, "They know."

I seized him by the cloak almost fiercely, and exclaimed,—

"Whom do you mean? and what do they know? Speak out plainly, for I tell you, Ferris, I am in no mood to be trifled with."

"Nay, good cousin, hands off, if you please, or my lips are sealed. So. Now give me your ear." And again lowering his voice he whispered, "Go to Apwood; stick to him like a burr, make him tell you what he has been doing down

at Plymouth all the week. Don't betray me; but stick to him till he tells you."

I begged for further information. He either could not, or would not, say more, and was impatient to be off.

"How can I believe a word you say, after the lying note warning me against bailiffs, when bailiffs there were none?"

"The note! pshaw! 'twas none of mine. Oh, you don't know half their dodges, good cousin, not half. Hark'ee," and again he drew nearer, "don't heed letters or notes, even in my own handwriting. I'm not my own master, and may do you a mischief against my will. But I tell you what, cousin; I will give you warning whenever I know there's mischief brewing, even though my own hand be in the mash-tub."

I naturally asked,—

"How is that to be, if I cannot trust your own letters?"

"Listen. When you receive an envelope by post, containing nothing but a sheet of blank paper, then be on your guard," whispered the old man. "More than that I dare not do. Be on your guard, and, if possible, change your lodgings."

I did not know whether to believe the old man or not, but returned to the subject of Apwood, and pressed for more information.

"Can't say another word, coz. Stick to him like a burr ; that's all you'll get out of me. Now, Bella, come away. Bless the girl, if she ain't going to cry. Now, Bella, d'ye see this horse-whip? shut up, or I'll make you. Don't you know you will set me off crying too?"

He brandished his whip with a feeble attempt at severity, but instead of striking Isabella, laid it on the back of his cob, and cantered off. His daughter again clutched my hand, and leaving a letter in it, whispered,—

"Papa says you may draw for some money ;" then shook Hotspur's reins, and rode after her father.

The letter contained a blank cheque-book ; but actuated by mingled distrust and pride, I threw it into the hall fire as soon as I reached home.

Esher had waked up from his nap, and was anxious to start. I told him, how that from information just received, London, not Exeter, must be the point of my destination ; it was there I was most likely to obtain intelligence of my wife,

and frustrate the designs of my enemies. His chaise could take me, however, as far as Stoke-upon-Avon.

I bade farewell to the few servants lingering about the place, cast one last glance on the picturesque old mansion, now no longer mine, no longer hers; then followed Esher into the chaise.

We parted at Stoke-upon-Avon. The old man was sorely tempted to leave the *Argus* in the lurch, and accompany me to town; he was tremendously indignant with Apwood, whose honesty he had always suspected, since he had dunned him for that paltry debt of twenty-five pounds under my roof.

But I persuaded the captain to go back to his ship; there was a greater criminal than Apwood whom I wished to deal with, namely, Sir Hugh Littlecot, and Esher's presence would only be an incumbrance; I went up by the mail alone.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO SUFFERERS.

APWOOD's address in town was no longer the quiet, unassuming lodging he formerly frequented; it was a smart-looking house in a new crescent near the Knightsbridge Road.

At the door was a showy turn-out, a cabriolet with a high-bred horse; the small groom in charge, whose face forcibly expressed the useful social qualities of impudence and cunning, did not condescend to make way the fraction of an inch for my humble hack cab. On ringing and inquiring for Apwood, a footman in smart livery asked my name, and would not leave the door till I gave it; he returned speedily, and said his master was out of town. I knew that he lied, but was in doubt what to do. Whilst I hesitated, Apwood's face appeared for an instant

over the window-blind, and this decided me. Pushing suddenly forwards, I told the footman in an authoritative voice that I knew his master was at home, and must see him.

The man began to bluster, and offered resistance; I put him on one side with an impatient movement of my arm, and went upstairs, he following with eyes and mouth open. On entering the drawing-room I caught sight of Apwood, escaping by a door at the farther end; before he could shut and lock it, which he attempted to do, I forced my way through, and, breathless with agitation, confronted him for a moment without speaking.

"Mr. Chauncey, Mr. Chauncey," exclaimed Apwood, much disturbed, "pray command your feelings. Here is a chair; let us sit down quietly; be calm; be reasonable."

I rejoined, pushing aside the chair he offered me,—

"Attend to me, sir. Why I am come here you must very well know. I want information respecting my wife, and until I have it, I shall not leave you."

"My dear sir, I grieve over your family mis-

fortunes, but really cannot help you in that direction--cannot indeed. If it is only on Mrs. Chauncey's account you seek me, I tell you at once, it is mere waste of time."

With difficulty I restrained my passion, as I beheld my quondam steward standing before me, plump and ruddy with health, the picture of a prosperous but vulgar-minded man of the world, attired in the height of fashion, each moment regaining his wonted self-possession, his half-deferential, half-encroaching familiarity of manner. I placed my hat and stick on the table, and said, in a firm deliberate voice,—

"Sir, it has cost me much to look upon your face again; I would fain have held aloof from you for ever. But I am here for a weighty and sufficient cause; I am here to learn from you, and I will not quit the house without an answer, where my wife now is. You know, sir, and I insist upon an immediate reply."

So saying, I stepped towards him with a sudden gesture that induced him to retreat towards the bell.

"Whither," I continued, "have your cowardly intrigues driven her? where has she taken refuge?

Give me full particulars ; I am no longer a patient and submissive victim."

Apwood regarded me with alarm and perplexity.

" Why visit all your misfortunes upon poor me ? " he replied. " Why make me responsible for the crimes and follies of others ? Upon my honour —well, smile if you please ; I will be upon my oath, if you like it better—I have no notion of Mrs. Chauncey's present whereabouts. I have been in a painful position throughout this unlucky business ; I really have ; I could not help myself ; neither could I help you. And now I repeat it ; I have no sort of notion where Mrs. Chauncey has taken up her abode."

" How ? " I cried. " Can you deny that you were at Plymouth, waiting for my wife's arrival ? Do you not know that, deceived by a villainous fraud, she has left her father and not returned to me ? Have you not, from the very first, been in league with Sir Hugh Littlecot ? Have you not corrupted my servants, spread snares in my path, robbed me in cold blood not merely of my good name, but of peace and happiness ? Dare you insult me by expressions of hypocritical regret ? "

My voice grew louder, and my gestures more passionate. Apwood was more and more embarrassed.

“Sir, sir,” he resumed, “was I the cause of your residing with the young lady at Rouen? Was it my fault that not merely your wife, but the world, here in London and everywhere else, put an evil construction on your conduct? Was it my fault, sir? Do not you know that it was a common tale of the town?”

“Silence, sir; repeat these scandals at your peril. I ask you, once again, whither have you conducted my wife?”

“I tell you, Mr. Chauncey, I know nothing whatever about her; she has gone away, but whither I know not; I can tell you nothing further.”

Almost beside myself with passion, I exclaimed,—

“Dare you stand there calmly, villain as you are, and speak thus to a man—a husband bowed down and distracted with misfortune?”

I seized him by the throat, and shook him furiously to and fro. At any other time I might have pitied him; the man almost sank to the

floor in abject terror; pale, trembling, he could scarce muster strength to call for aid. Recollecting myself, I turned, and still retaining a firm hold of him with one hand, locked the door with the other.

“Now,” I cried, “instantly answer my question. I am a man whom you and your accomplices have driven to despair. I have nothing to lose—nothing to fear; I am capable of anything. You have robbed me of all I have ever loved; you have robbed me of one whom all the joys of the world could not replace; I am a solitary, broken-hearted, and desperate man. Answer me, or fear the worst.”

I seized my stick, and shook it over his head. Apwood struggled feebly; his lips strove to utter words, but in vain; his eyes stared at me wildly. A deep, almost compassionate scorn mingled with my hatred and my rage: I flung him into a chair, and stood before him waiting his reply. The strong man, quailing from fear, sat for awhile collapsed, but presently rallied, and gasped out,—

“Open the door—unlock it! Why treat me thus?” And he stretched his hand towards the bell, though it was far beyond his reach. “This

is outrageous, insulting, cruel. What would you have me do?"

I said nothing, but still stood before him; my silence gave him time to collect his faculties; he proceeded,—

"To be assaulted in my own house, and by you, sir! Was ever such a thing heard of? I must call for the police, I must indeed."

I moved, and his alarm returned. He hastily went on,—

"Mr. Channcey, don't touch me again; it is very wrong; it hurts my feelings; give me time, and all I know I will tell you."

The servant, who had heard angry voices, now knocked at the door. In a stern whisper, and placing one hand on Apwood's shoulder, I said,—

"Tell the man he is not wanted."

Apwood gazed round the room with a frightened glance, then obeyed me. The servant slowly retired.

Apwood again went on,—

"It is true I was at Plymouth—quite true. But I am under obligations to Sir Hugh, and only acted under his instructions."

"Did you see my wife?"

"I did; but, believe me, 'twas simply in obedience to Sir Hugh, and in total ignorance of the object he had in view. I'll tell it you all in order. I waited upon Mrs. Chauncey, and advised her as a friend to return to her duty as a wife, or legal measures would infallibly be taken —nay, were already commenced. Now, don't go off in a rage again, or you'll put me out; I just did as I was bid, and what I said did not seem to affect your wife; she treated me coldly—I might say disrespectfully—and replied that if her husband turned against her, that was no reason she should accept advice or assistance from his enemies, for his enemies were hers. And she told Winifred to show me instantly downstairs; she was at a lodging Winifred procured for her. Since then your good lady started for Exeter, and from thence I know not whither."

"Who knows?" I exclaimed, impatiently, "who knows?"

"If any one, Sir Hugh Littlecot."

"He?" I cried; "inhuman wretch, I rejoice to think over the misery I once caused him! Curses light upon his gray head!"

"Stop!" interrupted Apwood, "you do not

know whom you are cursing. The old man lies on his deathbed."

I was scarcely to be blamed if my first feeling were one of joy.

"On his deathbed? How long then has he been ill?"

"Yesterday he was seized with one of his old attacks in an aggravated form; true, he may linger for months, but will never leave that bed alive. I merely tell you what the doctors say."

"I wish to see him. Will you help me to obtain admittance?"

I spoke with less vehemence. The intelligence of Sir Hugh's illness had a little subdued me. Again, much as Apwood had wronged me, I felt ashamed of having taken advantage of his weaker nature to crush and humiliate him. I spoke then more calmly.

"I will take you to him, Mr. Chauncey. 'Tis returning good for evil, after all the rough usage I have suffered at your hands this morning, but I never was a man that bore malice. If you can get anything out of the old man, I assure you 'twill give me pleasure."

Apwood left the room for a few minutes, his

dress being disordered, and his coat torn in the recent struggle. On returning he said,—

“Mind, Mr. Chauncey, don’t betray me to the old man. He may live for weeks or months, and could give me a precious sight of trouble, if he chose; a fellow with money has long arms, even on his deathbed.”

Presently I found myself in Apwood’s cab, driving rapidly towards Grosvenor Square, side by side in amicable proximity with the man who, for months and months, partly for fear of shame and partly for love of lucre, had been patiently plotting my ruin.

A strange servant opened the door of Sir Hugh’s house in Grosvenor Square. My companion seemed to be well known, for he was at once admitted. Then followed a long parley between him and the nurse, as to the propriety of my seeing Sir Hugh.

It was cut short by Sir Hugh himself. The old man heard the sound of voices in the entrance hall, inquired who was there, and hearing it was Mr. Herbert Chauncey, sent out word that Mr. Herbert Chauncey was the man of all others he was anxious to see.

So, no longer delaying, I entered Sir Hugh's room, followed by Apwood. It was the sitting-room, with which the reader is well acquainted. But a bed had been put there, and on it the old man lay, without hope of recovery; the curtains of the bed were closed, and I had a moment's leisure to look round.

It was a relief to find that the portrait of the dying Ada was no longer there. The other portrait, soft, fresh, and instinct with rosy life, still hung against the wall; the young, girlish face, with its sunny tresses, smiled upon me as of old.

The curtains of the bed were now, however, flung aside with an impatient jerk, and, turning, I beheld Sir Hugh Littlecot sitting up, and gazing at me fixedly.

The pale exhaustion of recent suffering was upon his countenance; the brow was damp, and the gray hair lay upon it cold and matted; the features were sternly and sharply delineated as ever, and the eyes bright and penetrating. The excitement of the meeting gave him strength, and he sat up in bed unaided.

Thus, after much affliction and misery of

mind, we two met once more in the very room where we had parted. We regarded each other for awhile in silence—the oppressor and the oppressed, the persecutor and the victim—yet some might say the chastiser and the culprit. Probably I was not much less changed in outward appearance than Sir Hugh. If age and disease had emaciated his frame, and the stress of an absorbing passion imparted to his countenance a haggard and almost savage aspect, upon me had fallen heavily the stroke of reiterated calamity, stamping my face and manner with the characters of a lifelong sorrow. Perhaps in our mutual scrutiny there was a feeling allied to curiosity; perhaps even, on his side, some faint stirrings of compassion.

I approached his bed, and, sitting down in a chair near him, addressed him sadly, but with an approach to calmness.

"I call Heaven to witness," I began, "that it is with no evil motive I enter this room, whose very walls seem inscribed with the wretched history of the past; I call Heaven to witness that it is with no emotions of anger or hatred that I behold the man who has devoted himself body

and soul to the one work of compassing my ruin and my misery. Meet me, sir, with something of the same spirit. Surely if there are crimes which cannot be forgiven, there is at least a point at which the thirst for vengeance is satiated?"

Sir Hugh's head sank back on his pillow, and he listened to me without interruption. Nay, at first I think my words, revealing how deeply I had suffered, were pleasing to him.

"Sir," I continued, "what is this melancholy world to you? Surely, on the threshold of an awful eternity, wrath and hatred should subside into empty shadows, and holier feelings possess our hearts! Does the thought touch you, sir? does it strive for mastery with the blind and savage spirit which has held you so long in bondage? Would that it were so! would that the desire of mercy for yourself would humble your mind, and make you merciful towards others! Abased and afflicted as I am, I myself would tend you in your sickness, and watch over you unto the end!"

Seized by unusual emotion, my tongue faltered, my colour changed, and tears sprang to my eyes. Did the old man's resolution waver, and a softer

feeling begin to steal over his heart? I knew not, for his face was turned from me, and he lay perfectly quiet.

As for myself, I spoke only what I felt; vindictive passion had left me; I had forgiven my enemy, and when we have done so, the injury he has inflicted instantly loses something of its severity; my grief was profound as ever, but it was less harsh and bitter. I continued,—

“ Consider, sir, what you have done. Look at the picture your own hand has traced to gratify an ungovernable longing for revenge. A man, accompanied by honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, who had won golden opinions of all sorts of men, such you found me. What am I now? My character blasted and disgraced, a byword amongst men, condemned by the good, mocked at by the wicked, my property wrested from me by an unjust decision. But more, far more; you found me not alone. I had a wife; she was all in all to me. Beguiled and deceived through your means, she shuns me as her worst enemy.”

Grief for the moment overcame me.

“ Sir Hugh, it may be you can restore her to

me. But I do not ask it now; I ask you, in all sincerity, simply this one favour—I ask you, for the sake of your own peace as well as mine, to forgive me the wrong I did you. Sir Hugh, if the sainted dead are cognizant of what passes on earth, be sure that your sweet child has forgiven me, and would fain have you to forgive me also."

The old man turned upon me a countenance expressive of the strife within his breast. I had bent towards him; my hand sought his; my accents, my looks, guaranteed the sincerity of my words.

The moment was indeed critical: even now there was in his eyes the moisture of gathering tears; thus softened, thus touched, he cannot choose but yield. My heart swelled with hope. Sir Hugh's lips moved.

"Can this be?" he murmured; "can disease thus umerve me? after labours so unremitting, efforts so desperate, intrigues so unscrupulous—nay, be honest, be honest—so sinful, do I now flinch?"

Here, on a sudden, the door of the apartment gently opened. My anxiety was great; but how shall I describe my disgust and vexation, when I

saw thrust forwards in obsequious attitude the hateful form of Crawdle.

It was a juncture of vital importance ; his presence might destroy at one blow all my rising hopes. Before I could speak or move, he entered, and beholding me seated by the bedside, started back amazed ; then quickly glancing to the changed countenance of Sir Hugh, he appeared instantly to comprehend the purport of our conversation.

With well-feigned horror, he cried,—

“ What, Mr. Chauncey, you here ! Can I believe my eyes ? You, of all persons in the world ! For shame, for shame ! Are you aware you are committing homicide, sir ? Downright murder, sir ? At such a moment, in Sir Hugh’s critical state, excessive nervous debility, organic mischief commenced, so exciting a scene, sir ; talking, talking, talking ; for shame, for shame ! Sir Hugh, if you value your life at a brass farthing, order him out of the room instantly ! Mr. Chauncey, humanity, honour ! This is a base revenge. Fie, fie ! ”

Confounded by this sudden onslaught, I could only glance imploringly at Sir Hugh. But so

far I flattered myself the interruption had done little mischief.

Sir Hugh regarded him with loathing; he waved his hand, and replied haughtily—

“ Go, sir, go; when I require your presence I will send for you.”

But Crawdle was not so easily rebuffed. Shaking his head solemnly from side to side, he approached nearer, exclaiming—

“ Dear Sir Hugh, listen to one who is not only your humble friend and dependant, but your family apothecary into the bargain. That man means mischief. He is come to insult over your dying torments. Rouse yourself, Sir Hugh, and bid him depart. The sight of that man is worse than prussic acid; I stake my professional reputation on it.”

Great self-command did I exert to keep down my indignation. I implored Sir Hugh not to listen to a contemptible creature, ready to sell himself to anybody—ay, even to myself—if a sufficient price were offered, nor to suffer me to leave the house without some assurance of his forgiveness.

“ Preaching, I declare!” Crawdle puffed forth.

"Quite repentant; a sort of male Magdalen truly; oh, beautiful! very touching indeed! But come, sir," said he, approaching me with a blustering swagger, "this tomfoolery must cease. I am a medical man, and accountable for the baronet's life. I stand in Dr. G——'s shoes. You must be removed, sir; you must walk, sir."

He planted himself a couple of yards off, with legs wide apart, regarding me with pretended disgust; his great object being to provoke me to some act of indiscretion. I turned to Sir Hugh, and to my sorrow perceived that this clamorous intrusion had checked the current of wholesome thought into which he had fallen, and excited his brain injuriously. He was angry, disgusted, weary of himself, and of all around him; his brow was dark, and his eyes glanced restlessly to and fro.

I was in despair: my efforts after all seemed to have been in vain. He paid no heed to what I said. But at that moment, aid came to me from an unexpected quarter.

All this time, during my appeal to Sir Hugh, and Crawdle's impudent interference, Apwood had been standing at the farther end of the bed, concealed

from sight by the curtains—a silent, but by no means indifferent listener to all that passed. I had myself forgotten his presence; Sir Hugh was not aware of it; neither was Crawdle.

The man was in a state of much excitement; his face was pale with a nobler emotion than the unmanly terror he had so recently exhibited.

Stepping forwards with a gesture of authority that at the moment one would have almost imagined familiar to him, he exclaimed to Crawdle,—

“Impudent old rogue, I can stand this no longer; quit the room instantly. Your presence is offensive; go, and repent of the share you have had in our common wickedness.”

Crawdle was at first astonished; he could not believe his own ears. Then the idea struck him, that this outbreak of Apwood must somehow or other be an ingenious dodge or profitable stratagem. He stared at each of us in succession; winked at Apwood, grinned impudently at myself, mumbled out a threat of coming down upon us with Dr. G——, and bustled out of the room.

At first, Apwood’s generous advocacy filled me with a glow of pleasure. But a glance at Sir

Hugh gave another colour to my thoughts ; the old man's countenance betokened a coming storm.

Meantime, Apwood hastily approached, and seized my hand, exclaiming with much emotion,—

“ Mr. Chauncey, forgive me : I have acted a villain's part. Your words went right to my heart. True, I have never ceased to look at my conduct with shame and disgust ; but that was in secret. Now I proclaim it openly : I openly confess that sheer cowardice, and greedy desire for gain, have led me step by step to the lowest depths of infamy. Forgive me, Mr. Chauncey, forgive me ; forgive us all. We have plotted against you with the vilest cunning, the most shameless audacity. Join with me, Sir Hugh, join with me in this too long deferred repentance ; let us ask pardon of the man we have so basely injured, and make what amends we can.”

When Sir Hugh Littlecot heard these words—words that roused in my breast feelings of mingled joy, surprise, and fear—he was seized with an almost intolerable outbreak of rage ; in vain I endeavoured to soften the effect of Apwood's sudden confession.

Sitting upright in bed, with knit brows, and

eyes glowing with excitement, Sir Hugh, in a voice of singular strength, addressed himself to Apwood.

“Fellow, get out of my sight! you are a worn-out tool, and I have done with you. But remember: a word from me, and your lodging will be a felon’s gaol. As for you,” he cried, turning upon me a countenance which, considering the time, the place, the passions it displayed, might well be termed dreadful—“as for you, miserable hypocrite, who, having betrayed, abandoned, murdered—yes, murdered—my darling child, come here to triumph over my weakness, and gloat over my trouble, I hate you, and I defy you. Dying I may be, but I have life enough and strength enough to baffle and confound you even yet. What! You, to talk of holy things, and prattle of repentance! You! a public rogue! I am sick of your whining hypocrisy. Who can repair the past? Ay, but I can avenge it. You say true. I am the man who has stripped you of fortune, friends, and honour. Yes, I admit it, I am the man—I, Sir Hugh Littlecot; and I thank Heaven for making me an instrument of his just wrath. What! forgive you! Never. Why, if I could

purchase long years of life and health, by restoring to happiness you and the woman you love, do you think I would do it? No, man, no. Rather would I die this moment, leaving you hopeless and desolate, than live for years, and see one ray of comfort break the darkness of your misery. So now, you know my mind."

The unhappy man sank back upon his pillow, exhausted ; deeply shocked, I took Apwood's arm, and, having rung the bell for the nurse, left the room without uttering another word.

CHAPTER XI.

BE ON YOUR GUARD.

THE cabriolet was at the door; we both sprang in, and Apwood touching the horse with the whip, we started off at a rapid pace, whither, I believe at the moment, neither of us much cared. The scene we had witnessed had greatly disturbed us, though in different ways. Vexed and disappointed as I was, shocked at the spectacle of an old and dying man devoting his last energies to the gratification of vindictive passion, there was one thought that afforded me some little comfort—I had asked forgiveness for my offence; I had stretched forth a hand of reconciliation to the man who had injured me more than I had injured him; I had borne with an approach to resignation his insulting taunts and furious reproaches.

As for Apwood, his agitation appeared even

greater than my own. This was perhaps natural. The confession of guilt gives a great wrench to the coarsest nature, and Apwood's flushed countenance and trembling hand showed the struggle through which he had passed; I felt for him, and said a few words to reassure and comfort him.

"You are very good, Mr. Chauncey, but I don't deserve any praise for the part I took just now. 'Twas forced from me; I couldn't help speaking out."

There was again a pause. Presently he added, in a nervous, hurried way,—

"Mr. Chauncey, I have an appointment in the City this morning, but if you will come to my house at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, we can talk over the past at our leisure, and I will tell you all I know."

I should have preferred going into the matter at once, but had no option, so promised to call on him as requested.

We were driving towards the City as fast as the crush of carriages permitted, and there was now little time to say anything; but in my anxiety I put two or three hasty questions.

"I did not see Alphonse at Sir Hugh's. Has he left his service?"

"He took leave of Sir Hugh yesterday. He has gone to join Winifred. The two are off for Italy. A precious couple!" and Apwood flicked his horse's ears with his whip, adding, "Winifred's not so bad though; 'twas all for love of the little tawny-faced courier that she did Sir Hugh's bidding, and love is a great fact with womankind, ain't it, Mr. Chauncey?"

"But about the marriage with your sister, Mr. Apwood? Tell me how the case really stood: was it before or after the date of the will? and who stole the marriage certificate? was it Winifred?"

"Take care, Mr. Chauncey, take care; that confounded groom is listening. To-morrow at ten you shall hear all."

I was disappointed, but presently, in a lower voice, asked,—

"Can I trust Ferris?"

"Upon my word and honour, I scarcely know; the fellow has played Sir Hugh's cards famously, but the screw was twisted uncommon hard, and 'tis not to be wondered at. We suspected him

of treachery once or twice ; but it was only to give the screw another turn, and he was at Sir Hugh's service again. It's been a queer game, Mr. Chauncey, and a dirty one ; I shall never hold up my head again."

"But how did Sir Hugh get such a hold on these men ? Crawdle and Ferris are, or were, directors of the Aberfoil Mining Company."

"Hush, hush !" interrupted Apwood, hastily.

"Of which I think you were formerly solicitor," I continued. "Was there any fraud or trickery in the management of the company ? Sir Hugh, I remember, had shares."

"Wait till to-morrow, Mr. Chauncey, wait till to-morrow ; this is too public. The company has gone to the dogs ; there's no doubt about that, and the least said the soonest mended. Now, Mr. Chauncey, where shall I put you down ?" and Apwood's unsteady eye wandered inquiringly towards me.

I got out at Temple Bar, and bade him good-by. He begged to be allowed to shake hands with me, to which I of course cheerfully assented ; then reminding me to be with him punctually at ten, Apwood drove on.

I stood for a few seconds in some perplexity in the middle of the pavement, but the throng of passengers soon forced me onwards, and I returned to my hotel.

Next morning I was at Knightsbridge Crescent at ten, to the minute. To my surprise the shutters were closed, and bills, inscribed with "This house to let," in huge characters, in every window.

I rang two or three times before the door was opened. A charwoman protruded a cross-looking face from the door, and asked whether I had a card from the agents? "'Cause if you 'aven't a card it bain't no use tang-tanging at the bell at that rate."

Mr. Apwood had left, bag and baggage, late last night, and all the servants had cleared out an hour ago.

A few days afterwards I received the following note, in Apwood's familiar handwriting,—

"Don't despise me, Mr. Chauncey, but rather pity my weakness. I was truly penitent yesterday, and am so still; but I can't face public shame and beggary; more especially now, when I'm just beginning to enjoy myself, and take a

proper place in society. Mr. Chauncey, I am but flesh and blood; that gang can smash me if they catch me blabbing, and I can't stand it; when you get this, I shall have sailed for New York. God bless you, Mr. Chauncey; I wish I could help you, that I do."

Keen as my disappointment was, I was scarcely surprised. Apwood was one of a numerous class. Not villain enough to be at ease in his villainy; not brave enough nor honourable enough to part with ill-gotten spoil, and submit to punishment, however well deserved.

Disheartened and baffled, I started for my solicitors to take advice as to my next step. It was necessary indeed to look round me. The sum of money coming to me under the deed by which my cousin Ferris took the Glenarvon property, saved me from total ruin; it enabled me to refund the bulk of the amount I was indebted to the estate, and meet various claims which otherwise would have crushed me. A balance, however, remained unpaid, and to liquidate this, I was compelled to raise money as best I could; the result was, that my net income for two or three years would be barely a hun-

dred. Rosamund had about fifty pounds a year of her own, settled upon her by her mother, who no doubt had wholesome misgivings as to Captain Esher's prudence in money matters.

Ruffhead's first advice was,—“Chauncey, depend on it, your good lady will draw that money regular, for she has nought else to live upon. The bankers will therefore know her address. Write to them, Chauncey, *instanter*; our clerk should do it, but I want to save you expense; here's pen and ink; write away, there's a good fellow.” As before intimated, Mr. Ruffhead, kind-hearted though he was, could not help being vastly more familiar with me, now I was a poor man.

Writing to the bankers came to nothing; the fifty pounds was paid in half-yearly instalments through a Paris house, and Mrs. Chauncey had written from Exeter, to say she would draw her money each half-year through an agent whom she would name hereafter.

Of course other steps were taken to discover Rosamund's address, but the clue for the present was lost. Miss Cossett, indeed, still received letters from her, but no address was given; the

letters were forwarded under cover to some friend in Paris, and contained little more than an intimation that Rosamund and her little one were well, and still residing in England. Scanty, yet precious consolation for my poor, careworn heart and burdened spirit, without which the powers of life must needs have given way.

In the meantime, my narrow income compelled me to exercise the strictest economy. London is a place where a man may live very cheaply if he will; there are also openings for employment, not to be found elsewhere; but above all, it is a place whence, even in those days when railways were in their infancy, the most distant points could be reached with the least amount of difficulty. I clung therefore to London.

My lodging was a triangular little sitting-room, with the tiniest of bedrooms adjoining, at the corner of the least attractive, and therefore the cheapest, street I could find. My landlord had been once a cook, and, having made money, set up an hotel, and was a bankrupt in six months; he had now taken to letting lodgings, and having lost all faith in his own judgment, humbly left the management to his wife.

Mr. Ruffhead procured me some copying to do. The pay was small, but not to be despised ; it was all he could do on the spur of the moment ; in good time, something better might be heard of. I wrote hard most of the day, dining usually at seven, for I was accustomed to it ; the plainest little meal it was ; for though my landlord was a cook, he never exerted himself save on special occasions, and special occasions rarely came. Once Ruffhead lunched with me, and two or three *entremets* decorated the board, followed by an elaborate pudding, the receipt of which my landlord had learnt from the *chef de cuisine* of the Russian ambassador. The results were a scolding from Ruffhead, for eating such extravagant dinners, and a heavy addition to my bill at the end of the week.

One morning I was hard at work at some writing Ruffhead told me it was of great importance to finish quickly ; I had sat up most of two nights to get it done by the end of the week, and it was now Friday, and the work would be ready I hoped by the evening ; I had breakfasted early. The postman's rap was heard at the door. Of course that sound was one I never listened to

without a thrill of expectation; it might herald intelligence of the dear ones from whom I was severed.

A letter was placed on my writing-table; there was a penny more to pay, and the good landlady, preferring ready-money settlements, would not leave me till I had paid it. I opened the envelope, and found inside nothing but a blank sheet of paper.

At first I was very much puzzled, but on a sudden recollected that it was the signal by which Ferris had promised to forewarn me of danger; fear and anxiety seized me. Experience had too well convinced me of the malignant industry of my foes to permit me to treat the warning lightly; whatever might be the precise object of the person who sent me the letter, of this I might make myself sure, that it boded me no good.

I sat for a few minutes gazing on the blank sheet in much perturbation. What was I to do? Ferris had instructed me that on being thus warned I must leave my lodgings immediately, and go elsewhere. But the conditions were a week's notice or a week's rent, and I could ill afford the latter alternative.

What was the nature of the danger impending? Perhaps my enemies had ferreted out some old debt, and had set bailiffs on my track. Well, I was not going to be intimidated by bailiffs again; it would have been well if I had never allowed myself to be so before; my last flight might have saved me from a debtor's prison, but only to involve me in misfortunes far more grave.

A debtor's prison was nothing to me now, and the explanation once suggested, the blank sheet of paper rapidly lost its terrors; I would take a turn in the street, and, if any one wanted me, he would put his hand on my shoulder the moment I issued from the house. So, leaving my manuscripts on the writing-table, I went forth, but was molested by no one. The tremor of my spirits had not wholly subsided, and I walked twice up and down Oxford Street to regain calmness and equanimity. Returning to my lodging, and opening the front door with a latch-key, I went upstairs, and to my surprise heard voices in my sitting-room.

The moment I entered, my landlord and landlady hastened to decamp, their countenances expressing what seemed to me extreme embarrass-

ment, not to say alarm. Seated in my own particular arm-chair, the only comfortable chair my lodging could boast of, was a rather well-dressed gentleman with a silk front to his cravat on which was a smart pin; his whiskers were neatly trimmed, his shirt-collar conspicuously clean and well starched; there was a thick gold ring on one of his fingers. Rising from my arm-chair with quiet alacrity, he advanced towards me hat in hand, and, gathering from the expression of my countenance that I was mentally ejaculating, "Who are you, sir, and what do you want?" exclaimed, in mellifluous accents,—

"Mr. Herbert Chauncey, I believe? Beg to make ten thousand apologies for this intrusion, but, understanding the whole house was to let, I took the liberty of asking leave to see it; I trust, sir, you will pardon the liberty. This appears a commodious residence on a limited scale; now, how about the drainage, sir? And the chimney, sir? It seems to me addicted to smoke; pray, sir, don't it make your head ache?"

"No, sir; I am not subject to headache."

"No headache? How very extraordinary! Are you sure, now, that you don't hear a frequent

buzzing in your ears? Smoke is a trying thing, sir; affects the whole system; I'll be bound, nay, though I don't like betting, I'll bet you a pair of gloves, that since you've come into this smoky atmosphere, out of the fresh air, your pulse is going thump, thump, like a steam-engine!"

The absurd man stretched out his hand, and playfully tried to feel my pulse, but I drew back, and he turned to another subject.

"Fine view out of a corner house, sir. I suppose I shall have to pay higher rent in consequence, though I don't care about looking out of window myself; yes; a fine view. Ah! I think I see old Sir Hugh Littlecot at the end of the street; but that's impossible, for I hear he is sadly out of health. D'ye know the worthy baronet, sir? Excuse me, but by the start you gave when I named him I judge you're a trifle interested in him."

I answered in the affirmative, thinking he would leave me all the sooner if I gave him swing.

"Ha! you know him, Mr. Chauncey? You know that best and most benevolent of men; that friend to the widow and fatherless; that model baronet of the nineteenth century, brim-

ming over with the milk of human kindness — ”

Fatigued before by my visitor's loquacity, I was now really annoyed, and said, shortly,—

“ My opinion of Sir Hugh differs widely from yours, sir, but my time is much occupied, and I really cannot enter into that or any other topic.”

My companion persisted in dwelling on Sir Hugh's merits, disarming my irritation by apologies for intruding, and speaking all the while in the most insinuating accents; at last, unable to endure the man any longer, I plainly told him Sir Hugh was a very bad old man; I could only hope he would repent even at the eleventh hour; but, however that might be, I must now beg to be left to myself. The unknown gentleman, profuse in apologies, glided by me, and stretched out his hand as he passed but I did not take it, and he put it in his pocket with rather a discomfited air.

Impatient to resume work, I went to the table, but found all my manuscripts removed.

I rang loudly; the landlady appeared, still looking flurried and disturbed, with her husband

—a thing unusual with that phlegmatic man—anxiously peeping over her shoulder.

“Where are my papers, Mrs. Plummer?”

“Oh, dear sir,” rejoined Mrs. Plummer; “you see, you dine early to-day, and ‘tis as near one o’clock as can be, and so Plummer and I moved the papers, and we’re a-going to lay the cloth, dear sir.”

The woman’s abject civility of manner softened me.

“Well, lay the cloth, and bring the dinner.”

Plummer and his better half bustled about, and in a few minutes my dinner was ready.

“Such a nice dinner, dear sir! Plummer has done his best of bests. And I do hopes as how you will enjoy it, dear sir.”

The woman puzzled me; she was painfully polite and deprecating. The presence of Plummer was another puzzle; he had never honoured me with his assistance before. Now he watched every movement I made, staring with open eyes as if there was something alarming in my appearance; I looked casually in the glass, but saw nothing remarkable. The most puzzling thing of all, however, was the dinner: a small tureen of rich

satisfying soup, a piece of salmon, a curry; not a bad dinner, and I do not know that I should have made any objection except on the score of expense; but there was no knife on the table. I did not want one with soup, fish, or curry, but one likes a knife on the table, and there was no such thing in the room.

“Bring me a knife.”

I thought that both the Plummers gave a simultaneous shudder; why, I could not conceive.

“Bless you, dear sir, it ain’t genteel to eat fish with a knife; it ain’t indeed,” said the woman, in a wheedling voice.

“I don’t care: I want a knife.”

Another shudder, and then both of them disappeared. No knife was brought: I rang, but the bell was not answered. Going to ring again, I paused to stir the fire. The poker, tongs, and shovel had disappeared; what can all this mean? I went to my bedroom. Razors, scissors, and penknife were carefully tied up in a sealed parcel; here also the fire-irons had vanished. Everything with which I could do mischief to myself or others; what did it mean?

That plausible, insinuating gentleman, who in-

veigled me into a controversy about Sir Hugh, had he anything to do with these precautionary measures? Who was he? I remembered the token of danger received by post that morning, and, hastily finishing my repast, sat down by the fireside to reflect.

Suddenly a thought struck me; I ran to the door, about to shout angrily for the Plummers, but prudence suggested a different course.

Going downstairs, I requested Mrs. Plummer in the mildest of voices to clear away the dinner things; reassured by my manner, she ventured upstairs, still escorted by her husband, and complied with my request.

Before they left the room, I again addressed Mrs. Plummer.

“Mrs. Plummer, do you know why the doctor came to see me this morning?”

“Oh, bless you, dear sir, what a question! how should I know?”

“We ’adn’t the imperence for to go to ask him, dear sir,” put in Mr. Plummer, winking at his wife, as if he had said something clever.

“Now attend, if you please. That doctor thinks me out of my mind, and he has told you so.”

The Plummers fell back by common consent to the door.

"Don't be frightened, I am not going to be violent."

"Oh, that's a kind good gentleman! Do 'ee talk quietly."

"Don't 'ee be violent, Mr. Chauncey, it aggravates the symptoms dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Plummer, in the most coaxing voice, and keeping her hand on the lock of the door.

"Well, now listen; it's an uncommonly disagreeable thing to have a madman for a lodger." The man and wife assented in one breath.

"And I dare say you would be glad to get me out of the house as soon as possible?"

"Oh, dear sir, I'm sure I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Plummer, rubbing her eyes with her apron; "but you see some lodgers is so particular, and don't like a fuss. And then Plummer enjoys very poor health, and is uncommon weak about the legs if he should be wanted to hold you; and I am sure I don't know what to do no more than the hearthbrush!"

"I will leave your house in half an hour, and never trouble you again, if you will help me."

The Plummers rejoiced from the bottom of their hearts, but thought it prudent to feign regret; my departure was, however, wonderfully expedited; there was no question of a week's rent; the Plummers scorned the notion; my clothes were neatly packed in the twinkling of an eye.

I confess I was as anxious to part company as they were. There was no doubt the smooth-tongued gentleman was a medical man sent to examine me, with a view to signing a certificate that I was of unsound mind. My friends the Plummers, in the first glow of grateful delight at my departure, and, perhaps not sorry to stimulate my anxiety, admitted that the doctor had cautioned them to be on their guard against me. I was liable to maniacal outbreaks of passion if a certain gentleman's name was so much as mentioned in my presence; so the doctor had been instructed.

I learnt also, and the information quickened my movements, that another medical gentleman was coming to see me at two o'clock; he would have assistance at hand in case of necessity.

My anxiety to be gone was extreme. Monstrous as it seemed, how could I be sure that I might

not that very night find myself within the four walls of a lunatic asylum, legally detained under a duly signed medical certificate? And once there, without friends, without money, what would become of me?

I do not think I have ever been more frightened in my life than I was that day; carrying my portmanteau in one hand, and my bag in the other, I ran out of the house, and made for the nearest cab-stand; it was close on two o'clock; I jumped into the first cab, calling out the name of an hotel in Piccadilly from whence the night coaches started for the provinces. My whole anxiety was to get out of London as soon as possible. The driver took the shortest road to Piccadilly, for in my haste I had given him no special directions, and that led us past the identical house from which I had just made my escape; I dared not put out my head to speak, but sat back as far as I could.

We drove very close to the door. A hackney carriage was drawn up there. One or two persons were standing about. The landlady, Mrs. Plummer, was gesticulating with some energy to a stout figure in a greatcoat, carrying a large

umbrella. The stout figure was Crawdle. I had little doubt that an audacious attempt had been made to kidnap me as a lunatic, and lodge me in an asylum.

I breathed more freely as soon as the house where I had lodged was fairly left behind, but did not feel at my ease until I was clear of London.

I jumped into the first coach amongst some half dozen drawn up at the White Horse Cellar ; such was my haste that I literally did not know whither the coach was bound, and for the moment it did not much matter. I ascertained of my fellow-passengers, by indirect inquiry, that it was the mail for Holyhead ; but by the time we reached Reading, I recollect that in my hurry to escape I had left behind me the manuscripts preparing for Ruffhead ; I stopped therefore at that town, and wrote at once to my landlady, requesting her to deliver the papers to Ruffhead. I wrote to Ruffhead himself, explaining that the activity of my enemies compelled me to quit London, and assuring him of my regret at the delay in the delivery of the MS.

In a day or two I received replies, addressed, at my request, "Post Office, Reading." One from Mrs. Plummer, stating that the medical gentleman who called after I had left, particularly inquired after my papers, and, alleging that the work was hurting my brain, took them all away; Mrs. Plummer, in her simplicity, supposed Crawdle to be either an influential relative, or the family physician. The other letter was from Messrs. Ruffhead and Co., as follows:—

"250, New Square, Lincoln's Inn.

"DEAR SIR,

"We were certainly surprised to read the contents of your letter of the 9th instant, more especially as the MS. was not forthcoming at your lodgings. Strict inquiries were instituted, and we now have the satisfaction of stating that the MS. has been recovered; it was at a low pawnbroker's in the vicinity, inside a leather blotting-book, left in pledge on the previous evening. We are free to admit that the circumstance has caused us considerable pain and perplexity, but we have every reliance on your integrity and uprightness, and doubt not there has been underhand dealing on the part of some

person or persons unknown, for which you are not responsible.

"However, the frequent unpleasantnesses arising out of our mutual connection are not merely distressing to the feelings, but embarrassing in the way of business, and we would respectfully suggest that that connection should now terminate. Our Mr. Ruffhead regrets it will not be in his power to assist you in finding suitable employment, but he has much pleasure in enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds; this he trusts may prove useful under present circumstances, and can be refunded with the usual interest of five per cent. at your convenience, together with the outstanding balance of your account.

"In now taking final leave of you, our firm begs to tender thanks for past favours, and, with best wishes,

"We are,

"Dear sir,

"Your faithful, obedient servants,

"RUFFHEAD, RIPTON, AND CO."

Did I tear the fifty pound cheque in half a dozen pieces, and contemptuously fling them in

Messrs. Ruffhead, Ripton, and Co.'s face, through the medium of the post? No; at first, my sole unmixed feeling was one of satisfaction at receiving so handsome a sum of money. Then I read the letter a second time, felt hurt and indignant, had half a mind to show that I was so; but first thoughts after all are not so bad, and in them I soon took refuge.

I put the cheque into my almost empty purse, walked to the county bank, and got it cashed.

Perhaps the reader thinks I was shabby and mean-spirited; but then, has he ever been placed in circumstances similar to mine?

CHAPTER XII.

FRIENDS NEW AND OLD.

A FEW weeks have elapsed ; I am at Bagborough, busy, populous, smoky Bagborough, far away in the midland district ; what am I doing there ? why am I ascending the creaking stairs of that delapidated, many-storied mansion in the main street ? There is a glass door on the upper landing, and opening it, I enter a room of tolerable size, shabbily furnished ; the colourless Turkey carpet must have been among the earliest imported into the British Isles ; the windows need no blinds, for the glass is obscured by a film of dirt.

In front of the fire sat a couple of men, one seated astride of his chair, as in the attitude of a boy playing at horses, the other lounging with his back against the mantel-piece ; neither were

very young, but their manners were juvenile enough; they were not ungentlemanly, but an indescribable air of shabby genteel pervaded them from head to foot, from their exuberant but ill-trimmed whiskers, to the patched shooting boots of the one, and the nankeen boots with patent leather tips of the other. On the rug before them was a basket containing enough walnuts for a company of foot guards; the two men from time to time plunged their hands into the basket, drew forth a handful of walnuts, and cracked and ate them with persevering vigour, talking and laughing all the time. At the farther corner of the fire, sat an old man in a rusty black suit and blue spectacles; he was a small dried-up man, with a round bald head too large for his body; his hands were placed on his knees, and he never moved them except to take a very small pinch of snuff at regular intervals of ten minutes.

Adjoining the old man was an empty arm-chair with a greasy leather covering; it was partly turned from the fire, and before it stood a large writing-table strewn with letters opened and unopened, bills tied up in red tape, bundles of miscellaneous papers, piles of pamphlets, a few

books of reference, pen, ink, and paper. On another table within reach, was a huge heap of newspapers ; under the writing-table a waste-paper basket.

There was a map or two against the wall, and a bookcase with a respectable array of books ; but the books on closer inspection proved for the most part obsolete law-books and other lumber, intended to give a literary aspect to the *sanc-tum* of the editor of the *Bagborough Beacon, or Literary and Political Vortex* ; for such was the dingy apartment in which we were assembled. I was one of the editor's staff ; it was Eustace Pole who got me the appointment ; I received a letter from him a few days after my flight to Reading. Eustace had quarrelled with his friends of the London press, and all on my account ; but he gave me an introduction to the *Vortex*, a thrice-a-week paper recently started at the large manufacturing city of Bagborough. The pay was moderate, and the work sometimes rather hard, but at first I liked it as much as I could like anything under my present circumstances ; I took an interest in the welfare of the paper, and was pleased to see my articles, literary or political,

flourishing in conspicuous type, and sometimes quoted in other journals. Soon my zeal cooled; partly because of the unremitting strain upon the mind, for the work was inexorable as clock-work, and the knowledge that it must be done by such a time weighed upon the spirits; partly because I found the whole concern was so purely a commercial speculation, that I felt almost ashamed to write with enthusiasm, or affect the dignity of a conscience; it was, in point of fact, a joint-stock company, and the votes of the shareholders regulated the politics of the paper.

My zeal cooled, but I did my work. The money was necessary to me; the only privilege I claimed, was to write upon those topics only on which my views accorded with the proprietors. The editor was one of the proprietors of the journal, and keenly interested in its success.

“Ah, Chauncey, me boy, how are ye?” exclaimed Flannagan, one of the two walnut-eaters in front of the fire. “Faith, you look cold, man! Don’t he, O’Grady?”

“Cold as a mummy!” cried the other. “Come, snuggle up to the fire; here, catch; there’s a walnut as big as a turnip! Flannagan bought a

basketful on tick, only, worse luck to him, he forgot the salt."

"O'Grady, you're mighty ungrateful! Here, Chauncey, sit down comfortable in the governor's chair. I was just telling O'Grady how my uncle came to inherit the great Ballynahinch property, celebrated for the size of its oaks; it takes five minutes to walk round the smallest of 'em at the rate of three miles an hour——"

"And I was just telling Flannagan I couldn't for the life of me find Ballynahinch in the Tipperary county map——"

"Ah, sure, he's an uncommon cool hand that Mr. O'Grady! Sir, you take a great liberty to hazard such a remark as that; but I'll explain it all to you; does not every mother's son of you know the Ballynahinch estates were washed away in the great storm of 1820,—the same year my West Indian property was smashed by the abolition of slavery——"

"I say, Bence," shouted O'Grady to the little old man in the corner, "is that the right date?"

Mr. Bence, without altering his position, immediately replied, in a dry, mechanical voice,—

"Date of Abolition of Slavery, 1826. Reign-

ing sovereigns of Europe; England, George IV.; France——”

“ That will do, Bence, that will do.”

“ Average rainfall for the year, fifty-one inches. Average price of wheat——”

At that moment the governor, or, in other words, the editor and joint proprietor of the *Bagborough Vortex*, entered the room. Mr. Bence relapsed into silence, and the two Irishmen occupied themselves in sweeping away the walnut-shells.

Mr. Fishguard was a stout, round-shouldered man, with sandy hair, and prominent light gray eyes, with a tinge of green in them; he rarely smiled, but made it the ruling principle of his existence to stick to business. Gentle in voice and manner, his nature was by no means devoid of pertinacity, but, like an India-rubber ball, preserved its original form more faithfully than if it had been of a much harder texture.

“ Ah, gentlemen, good afternoon. Mr. Flanagan, excuse me, but though rocking your chair may soothe the nerves, it endangers the legs of a very useful article of furniture. Glad to see you, O’Grady. Mr. Chauncey, your article on ‘ Soap

in its relation to longevity,' is very good, but a *leetle* too far ahead of public opinion ; we must tone it down a trifle. Mr. Bence, a pinch of snuff, please. Well now, gentlemen, have we skimmed the cream of the London journals ? O'Grady, have your scissors been busy ? Ah, I see it in your eye. Now then, who is ready with a remark ? I am all attention."

" There's dear old Dan O'Connell wants to reform the House of Lords," said Flannagan.

" Wheugh ! where will this stop ? Gentlemen, as constitutional Whigs, we go in for the Lords."

" Sure, Mr. Editor, I thought we were philosophic Radicals !" cried O'Grady.

" And a month ago high and dry Tories !" growled Flannagan, kicking the fire with the heel of his boot.

" Order, order, gentlemen. You labour under a weak, but excusable delusion. 'Tis the public, not the *Vortex*, that changes. But to return to the Lords, what say you, Mr. Chauncey ?"

" Why, I rather think it would be a Conservative move, to touch up the Lords a little ; make them *bonâ fide* representatives of the aristocracy,

and you will have a stronger breakwater against democracy than you are likely to have now."

"Hoity, toity, Mr. Chauncey! I won't trouble you for a leader on that subject; Flannagan, that will do for you. Mr. Bence, give Mr. Flannagan some facts."

"Oh, botheration! I'll invent the facts."

"Mr. Flannagan, I am shocked; after we break up, Mr. Bence will have a talk with you. Mr. O'Grady, I want a foreign article from you; please to settle the affairs of Europe as neatly as you can, but steer clear of the East; the complications are puzzling, and I have not felt the pulse of the public long enough to see my way. And now for local matters. There's a vacancy in the medical staff of the Bagborough Infirmary; the *Vortex* must take a line, and choose a candidate; there will be a sharp contest."

"And who's the lucky man?" asked O'Grady.

"Bloater," replied the editor, with some solemnity: "Bloater is our candidate. I have received an aggregate of forty-nine letters in his favour from correspondents, and only seventeen in favour of Smith: balance in favour of Bloater,

thirty-two. Mr. Chauncey, will you dash off something in Bloater's favour?"

"I hear he is an incompetent man," I replied.

"Be Jove, he don't know a stethoscope from an ear-trumpet!" exclaimed O'Grady.

"O'Grady, no levity, if you please. Mr. Chauncey, your attention for a moment. Bloater is a Bagborough man—Bagborough all over; the shoes on his feet, the coat on his back, and the heart in his bosom. What has Smith got to boast of in comparison with that, sir? Skill, sir?—experience, sir? I don't deny it; but I ask this—has he Bagborough blood in his veins, sir? Not a drop, sir. The man's an outsider." And the editor sank back in his greasy arm-chair, and paused for a reply.

I ventured to suggest that the infirmary was meant to benefit afflicted poor, and not local surgeons.

"Bagborough money built the infirmary, Bagborough money maintains it, Bagborough surgeons should have the benefit of it."

"But Bloater's not competent," I continued.

"But he's Bagborough, sir," rejoined the editor, with raised colour and voice not louder than

usual, but slightly tremulous. “What! do you suppose I am going to forsake the cause of Bagborough, because Bloater’s not an Astley Cooper? Sir, all medical science is a game of blind man’s buff. Mr. Bence, a quotation.”

“ ‘ Throw physic to the dogs ! ’ ”

“ Thank you, Mr. Bence, thank you. Very good. ‘ Throw physic to the dogs.’ ”

“ Sure, it’s mighty convenient for the dogs, then, that physicians’ prescriptions are written in dog Latin,” interrupted O’Grady, in a loud whisper. The editor glanced reprovingly at the two Irishmen, who were convulsed with laughter; then turning to me, went on,—

“ I see how it is, Mr. Chuncey, I see how it is. You’re too thin-skinned by half. I suppose I shall have to knock off a little article myself.”

Our “chief” was rose-pink with indignation, though his voice was still gentle and subdued; I was glad when the conclave broke up.

A day or two afterwards, out came a neat leader in the *Vortex*, denouncing Smith and lauding Bloater, the two candidates for the vacant appointment at the Bagborough infirmary.

It was, perhaps, foolish to interest myself keenly in matters with which I had no special concern, but I was annoyed that a first-rate surgeon should be set aside in favour of a man barely competent to discharge the duties of the vacant appointment, and wrote an article for the *Medical Remembrancer* on the subject; I had the satisfaction not merely of giving vent to my feelings, but receiving a couple of guineas for my trouble.

My satisfaction, however, as the reader will presently see, was of short duration.

Not many days afterwards, a letter reached me by post, having followed me to two or three different places. It was from Dr. G——, the physician in attendance on Sir Hugh Littlecot, and the contents filled me with a flutter of expectation. Dr. G—— informed me that Sir Hugh's malady had within the last few days assumed a severe form; the old man was near his end; but what interested me most was, that he had expressed more than once an anxious desire to see me.

To rise from my chair, pull forth and open my portmanteau, and pack up my things, was the work of a few minutes. But a disagreeable recol-

lection checked me in the midst of my operations ; I had not enough ready money in my pocket to pay my travelling expenses even to London, much less my hotel bill and journey back.

I had forgotten for the moment that I was a poor man. Yet the juncture was of great importance ; Sir Hugh had perhaps relented, was anxious to make amends, could tell me the address of my dearest wife, and undo the mischief he had caused both to her and to myself.

The only expedient that I could think of was to ask the editor of the *Vortex* to advance me a few pounds of my quarter's salary, due next month. It was necessary, indeed, for me to see him, for a strict rule of the office bound each of the "staff" never to leave Bagborough without permission. To beg a favour of that gentleman went sorely against the grain, but the excitement of hope imparted by Dr. G——'s letter braced me up for the ordeal.

It was late in the evening ; in the face of a cold sleety rain I hurried through the dark streets to the editor's smart little suburban residence. There appeared to be a dinner-party going on ; the entrance-hall was unusually bright

with gas. A hired waiter, with a rubicund countenance and a large white necktie, admitted me, and, not knowing who I was, gave audible instructions down the kitchen stairs to one of the maids to step up, and look after the hats and umbrellas, for there was “a strange gent in the house.”

My rubicund friend then returned, and, still regarding me with a dubious eye, showed me into a small back parlour, communicating with the dining-room. There was no fire, but the heavy smell of roast goose, combined with hot brandy and water, oppressed and sickened me.

Our “chief” after a little delay made his appearance through the folding-doors, admitting for a moment a blaze of lamplight, and an aggravated odour of roast goose. He was pettish, as men often are when interrupted at meals, and did not ask me to sit down.

“Anything the matter, Chauncey? Any news the other side of the herring pond? What’s in the wind, eh?”

With some little perturbation, I explained the object of my visit. Business of vital importance required my presence in town. Could he spare

me for a few days? And, I added, what was of equal consequence, would he pay me so much of my quarter's salary as was due up to that day? I should be grateful for the accommodation. I brought it all out at once, for I wished to have it over.

The "chief" rubbed his vapid gray eyes, buttoned and unbuttoned his coat, retreated about three paces, and stared at me. It was a disagreeable moment; however, my suspense was soon at an end.

In the politest tone he replied,—

"Indeed, Mr. Chauncey! business of vital importance! Ah, with some of the Cabinet Ministers, or possibly Royalty itself. Spare you for a few days? Oh, certainly, sir; for the term of your natural life. Salary, sir? On quarter-day your money shall be paid, but not a day, not a fraction of a minute sooner. Business, like charity, begins at home, Mr. Chauncey. If you break the rules of the office, it's no reason I should. Allow me to open the door, sir; the handle is stiff."

I did not trust myself to speak; I had begun to learn the useful art of holding my tongue.

Out I passed from the house into the sloppy street, and hurried home to my small lodging. When I reached my room, I was trembling, partly with cold, partly with suppressed emotion; with less economy than usual, I threw coals on my fire, and, making a reluctant blaze, sat down to dry and warm myself, as well as to think what I had better do.

I could not compel the editor to pay me a farthing till quarter-day; it was the agreement, and there was no doubt about it. Whence, then, could I procure funds for my journey? I might write to my bankers and ask them to advance me part of my small half-yearly income, the residue coming to me after other periodical claims were satisfied: I had no doubt they would concede the request. But then this was a resource I had wished to keep to the last, in case of some serious emergency. Besides, every hour was precious. I ought to start to-morrow morning.

Whilst ruminating in this way, I heard amidst the whistling of the wind through the chinks of my shaky old casement, and the frequent rattle of hail and rain against the window-panes, steps ascending the staircase leading to my room.

Presently came a knock ; the door was opened, and the imperfectly washed visage of the poor maid of all work bobbed into the room.

"Please, sir, a gentleman wishes to see you, but he won't come in, and hopes you won't object to speak to him on the staircase."

I stepped out, and after an examination, in the course of which my flaring tallow candle was blown out by the gusts of wind impatiently hurrying up and down stairs, I discovered that my visitor was Mr. Bence, the oracle of the *Vortex*, wrapped in a serviceable white greatcoat, very like a watchman's, but dripping with rain from head to foot. He respectfully removed his hat, and his large bald head shone dimly in the murky lobby, like a moon through a fog.

I had no idea what he wanted, but asked if he came with a message from the editor ?

"Message from the governor ! No, sir. Dined with him to-day, sir. Entertainment for the special behoof of the friends of Bloater, candidate for the vacant post at the Bagborough infirmary. Heard your conversation through the folding-doors, and can explain why the governor is so irate ; medical friend from your own county, sir—

Meadshire, if I mistake not—has informed against you, sir."

"What do you mean, Mr. Bence?"

"The article against Bloater in the *Medical Remembrancer* was yours, sir; I knew it, but said nothing; medical friend from Meadshire was not so discreet; blabbed it out to the governor; an indiscreet friend, very; Crawdle by name."

It was my article protesting against the local jobbery rampant at the infirmary.

Now, for one of the staff of the *Vortex* to write counter to the opinions of the editor in another journal was, in the estimation of the "governor," a crime tantamount to parricide. It was the old story of the serpent that bit the bosom in which it found warmth and shelter.

"Governor couldn't pocket the affront, sir. Was not sorry to find an excuse to quarrel with you. Ay, ay, sir, don't I know him through and through?"

I now urged him to come into my room.

"No, sir; equally obliged, but had rather remain in the obscurity of the lobby; we are touching on delicate matters, and you may prefer

we should not see each other's faces. Heard the conversation through the folding-doors. Trust you will excuse the inadvertence." Lowering his voice, he came close to me and thrust something into my hand. "A small sum, Mr. Chauncey. A loan, strictly a loan. I shall expect punctual repayment, whenever I ask for it. Two five pound Bank of England notes. A.C. 45,789 and X.Y. 59,001. Total, ten pounds, repayable with interest to myself, my executors, administrators, or assigns, whenever we ask for it. Now, sir, no words, if you please. The cash is yours, and if declined I drop it in the gutter. The mail starts at ten to-morrow morning; mention my name to Robert Stokes, the guard; oh, sir, I have plenty of friends at Bagborough, or I would not put my shoulder to the *Vortex*, I can tell you. Now, good-bye, Mr. Chauncey, good-bye. No words, no words."

The kindness of the old man took me by surprise, and before I had blurted out half a dozen words of gratitude, he had pulled his hat well over his bald head, and was stumping down-stairs, finding his way in pitch darkness from landing to landing, with a precision that showed

his memory was as accurate in practical as in literary matters.

It was late at night when I drove up to the door of Sir Hugh Littlecot's house in Grosvenor Square, having been travelling all day. A dim light shone from the window of Sir Hugh's room, but from no other. The front door was flung open directly my cab stopped. I ran into the house. The moment I crossed the threshold I saw by the countenance of the servant holding open the door that I was too late. On his face and on the faces of all I met lay the shadow left by the recent spectacle of death.

In the room I was accosted by Dr. G——.

"Mr. Chauncey, I believe? Ah, sir, we have sought for you all day. The old man would have died happier if he had seen you. He must have been tenderly attached to you!"

We advanced to the bedside, having closed the door upon the crowd of servants clustered outside, like a flock of frightened sheep.

Sir Hugh's countenance had greatly wasted away since I had last set eyes on it. It was stamped with the strange serenity ordinarily following death; the austere dignity of expres-

sion still lingered there, but the fierceness of mortal passion had vanished for ever.

He had pursued me with unrelenting hatred. He had filled my cup with gall, and made me drain it to the dregs. He had struck down the innocent with the guilty; he had stooped to the vilest dishonesty; he had hardened his heart against the dictates of mercy and justice; he had severed me from the woman whom I loved, and had left me poor, friendless, and solitary.

Yet, gazing on that poor helpless wreck of humanity, lying mute and motionless before me, no bad passion disturbed my spirit. I, too, had erred, nay, greatly sinned, and death had wiped out the record of his offences from my memory. The past was irrevocable. I suffered, but I accepted my sufferings as calamities common to man, rather than as injuries vindictively inflicted by an enemy.

Sir Hugh had frequently inquired for me during the last few days. As the bodily powers grew weaker, his anxiety to see me became more intense.

Was it that the old man felt a vague touch of compassion for my sufferings? Had conscience at

length waked up, and urged him to thrust forth a helping hand to the man he had injured ? Or, was it, that even on the bed of death, he was revolving new plans of vengeance, and desired to see me only for the purpose of multiplying my anxieties and aggravating my misery ?

None can say. There was no message nor letter. He died, and made no sign. Still hoping against hope, I lingered in that room, the scene of so much guilt and so much wretchedness, conversing with Dr. G——, and with Sir Hugh's immediate attendant. The only point of interest that transpired, related to Crawdle. The man had left the house about a fortnight since. There had been angry disputes between Sir Hugh and himself; the physician had interfered to maintain tranquillity in the sick room, and protect his patient from annoyance; Lord Annandale, as next of kin, was appealed to. Crawdle reluctantly yielded and took his departure, but not until a constable had been fetched to eject him from the premises.

It seemed not improbable, that these disputes arose from Sir Hugh's desire to send for me, and anxiety on Crawdle's part to prevent it; but this

was mere conjecture. I went forth from the house, and the noise of the street-door closing behind me struck on my ear like the knell of my lately raised expectations.

“Mr. Chauncey, is that you?”

The words came from a female figure, seated, wrapped up in a cloak, on the area steps. I knew the voice, but did not recognize the woman. She immediately rose, and, approaching me, threw up her veil. It was Winifred Jones. She was much altered. Her face, though still handsome, was thinner and paler, her eyes shone with a feverish lustre.

“Ah, you may well be surprised to see me, Mr. Chauncey. Sir Hugh’s servant told me you were expected, and I’ve been waiting ever so long. But don’t look at me so fiercely. I have wronged you and yours; but I have suffered for it. You’ll be famously revenged by and by!” And she laughed in a reckless sort of way.

I drew her aside. “Winifred, for God’s sake, tell me where my wife is, and I will forgive you all!”

She took from her bosom a small sealed packet, and, in a quick, excited voice, said,—

“I will tell you all I know. It was at Exeter I last saw her. There we parted, and it was my doing. I was sick of the vile game I had been carrying on all these days, and couldn’t abide the poor dear lady’s distress. It cut me to the heart, and I told Alphonse so. He swore at me awful for a good ten minutes, half French, half English, but that didn’t hurt me. So, by and by, he gave in, and I bade good-by to my mistress. Bless her innocent heart, she cried just as if she was parting from her best friend! And I cried too, for I couldn’t help it. Alphonse took me to London. At first I was happy; I loved him dearly. Hadn’t I given proofs of it? But that’s all over now. He was false to me, and when I found it out and fell in a rage, what did he do? Left me here in London alone, and sent me a ten pound note by the post! I haven’t changed that note yet though; I can get money fast enough; and if I can catch him, won’t I do something that will make a stir in the newspapers!”

“But, Winifred—my wife! where is she?”

The woman’s excitement had almost taken away her breath. In a moment or two she answered,—

"In Liverpool, as I believe. Go there, sir, and search for her. There was some friend she was going to, but name and address I have forgotten." Then she added, pointing to the window of Sir Hugh's bedroom, "Is the old sinner dead? Ay, well, *he* knew where she is. Go to Liverpool. You can't fail to find her after a bit. And take care of the parcel. There's a letter of yours from Rouen which the poor thing never got; a letter of hers from Plymouth, which Alphonse wouldn't let me put in the post; it would have made all straight. Give it to her as it is; the seal's not broken. There are a few lines scrawled by myself; I should die happier if I thought she and you would forgive me; but it's no use talking; there's no time to lose; get into your cab. But stop; one word more. Alphonse, in his haste to escape, left a small box of papers. I don't understand them, but Sir Hugh's lawyer shall have them, safe enough; I'm in hopes something may come of it to do you good. Now, get into your cab. Good-bye."

The woman was in an excited state, and I was loath to leave her to herself. I spoke to her kindly, urging her not to yield to despair, and

offering what assistance I could to procure honest employment.

She shook her head mournfully, and wrapping herself in her cloak, glided swiftly away.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE FRIEND LEFT.

THAT small packet of letters lies open before me, after the lapse of many years; the paper discoloured, the ink faded. The letter written by Rosamund from Plymouth moves me most. So truthful, so earnest, yet written with self-restraint and calmness; the first passionate thrill of anger and amazement on receiving the lawyer's letter had subsided, and she wrote, questioning whether my instructions had not been exceeded, questioning even the genuineness of the letter, pining to hear from my own lips or under my own hand and seal, whether I, her once loving and true-hearted husband, did in sober earnest mean to give her so cold and cruel a greeting on her first landing. She appointed a place of meeting, not many hours' journey from Glenarvon. She waited

to see me, or to hear from me, but waited in vain. My enemies knew her address, and were not slow to find means of working upon her sensitive nature and outraged affections.

Old letters give a mournful pleasure to some. The hand, the frank and loving hand, may be cold that traced them ; the eye so soft, so clear, so full of passionate meaning, may be quenched ; but faithfully and intelligibly, the pale characters still convey their silent message from “that darkened heart that beats no more.” To some this is a source of pleasure, but not to me ; my grief has been too real. Yet I would not be ungrateful ; my happiness has been equally so.

To return. With this packet of letters, now dim with age, and precious only to myself, then instinct with life and meaning, throwing light on the past, giving hope to hearts that were ready to despair—with this packet of letters I hastened down to Liverpool, and, taking up my abode at a respectable inn, immediately commenced my search.

A few days sufficed to convince me of one of two things—either my wife was not at Liverpool, or else she had assumed another name. Yet I

could not anticipate much delay in tracing her ; I remained at my inn, each day expecting to receive intelligence.

But inns, respectable or not, are expensive. One day I asked for my bill ; the charges were, I believe, nothing uncommon, but the total amount startled me. The waiter observed it. Like most waiters, he was familiar with certain phases of human experience, and took my measure and read my circumstances as in a book.

I was pressed for payment of my account before I went to bed ; I had enough to meet the demand, and carry me on some little time longer ; but it was imperative on me to quit the inn, and seek the cheapest lodging. My half-year's income would not be due for two months. What resource had I, in the event of failing to find my wife, when my small stock of ready money should be spent ?

I was suddenly filled with alarm ; money must be got in some quarter or other. In an indirect way I had made acquaintance with a man of business, of second-rate standing, in Liverpool ; he was civilly disposed, and an arrangement was almost concluded between us for engaging me, at

a low salary, when an unfortunate mistake on my part ruined all; I asked him to advance me two pounds of my salary. He comprehended my position in an instant; I was a needy, embarrassed man. He closed negotiations with me there and then, and civilly sent me about my business.

In the depth of my humiliation, I wrote to the editor of the *Vortex*, asking to be once more placed upon his staff, and promising not to employ my pen on any subject for the benefit of any other periodical.

To do him justice, the editor always answered letters with great promptitude. He wrote as follows:—

“The editor of the *Vortex* presents his compliments to Mr. Herbert Chauncey. The editor has filled up the vacancy caused by Mr. H. C.’s retirement, in a way perfectly satisfactory to himself and the public; anxious, however, to gratify Mr. H. C.’s laudable desire for remunerative employment, the editor will be happy to place at his disposal the appointment of ‘odd man’ on his establishment, the chief duties of which, as Mr. H. C. is aware, consist of sweeping out the office,

and calling at the contributors' lodgings for 'copy.'"

I appealed to my cousin Ferris, reminding him of his promises to assist me, and feeling sanguine that I should receive a favourable reply. But there was none; the reader will learn why presently.

Let me recall to mind the lodging I selected on quitting the inn; a dingy bedroom on the highest story of a rickety old house, in a back street, the window of which looked out upon a grim desolate waste of roofs, slated, tiled, and lead, of all conceivable geometrical proportions, diversified by a forest of chimney shafts and chimney-pots looming through the yellow, foggy, smoky atmosphere.

My landlady was a person of grave, almost stern, countenance, gaunt though once handsome, a figure tall and upright; she was negatively civil. Whatever was in the agreement, she did quietly and promptly; whatever was not there, she ignored as a thing impossible to be thought of.

The ground floor of the house was a shoemaker's shop, with a small parlour at the back,

in which the shoemaker, his wife, and children, took their meals by day, and slept by night. Above were two or three young women, who made a scanty living by their needle, and from whose window shone far into the night the light of the candle by which they worked, throwing a broad ray across the street and against the gloomy warehouse opposite. A family lived in the room on the same floor, consisting of a blind fiddler and two or three children either his own or hired, with a Scotch terrier expert at stealing, a perfect tyrant to his master; for, did the latter venture to chastise, or even harshly scold him for any canine misdemeanour, within a week the dog would gently draw him up to his ankles in some dirty pond, or guide him into the middle of a dungheap. The fiddler was reputed wealthy, and was treated with distinction by most of the lodgers.

On the floor over were three or four mechanics, sleeping in the same room, and two of them in one bed. The mistress of the house slept in the opposite room, with her only daughter, an infirm sickly girl who could not ascend or descend the stairs without assistance.

The stern-visaged mistress was a widow ; she kept one servant, a strong, raw-boned girl, who worked like a horse, and who occupied the attic opposite to mine. The basement was divided into a low, dark kitchen, and a darker scullery. What with the smells from this subterranean department, and the bad tobacco of the mechanics immediately below me, the atmosphere in which I lived was not agreeable. To open the window would have been, in these winter months, a proceeding savouring of insanity ; I had great difficulty to obtain warmth enough to enable me to sleep, and sometimes could only do so by lying down in my bed completely dressed.

My first night at that lodging-house is one I am not likely to forget. Long after the rolling of heavy carts over the paved streets, the rattle of carriages, and all the confused hubbub of the streets had ceased, the men in the room beneath me bawled songs in hideous chorus over their gin and beer, the blind fiddler accompanying them on his violin and sharing their potations ; the poor needlewomen on the floor below worked in silence, keeping themselves awake with their twice-boiled tea ; in the pauses of the uproar, I sometimes heard

the shoemaker tapping at his work in a shed in the small backyard. The mistress cared not, or appeared not to care, for the clamour. Her lodgers paid their rent punctually; she derived profit from boarding them and washing for them. This was enough; so she expressed herself to me next day, when I ventured to complain of the disturbance; they paid their rent; she hoped I would do the same; if I did not like my quarters, I might go elsewhere.

To return to that night: gradually the house grew quieter, until, except the busy scampering of mice behind the wainscot, and the snoring of the men, all was silent.

I stirred my morsel of a fire, lit my candle, which for the sake of economy I had put out, not having been able to read or write for the noise, and proceeded to make my scantily furnished attic as comfortable as I could. For a time the occupation diverted my thoughts from dwelling on the past or the future; but when I sat down in my solitary chair, and began to reflect in the stillness of the night upon my situation, there came a dark rush of despair such as I had never before experienced.

The memory of the past closed round me ; early sins were now clearly revealed to me : my treatment of Ada, dishonourable and base ; my conduct to my wife, weak, thoughtless, not untinctured by sin ; friends estranged or hopelessly severed from me ; resources rapidly failing ; the anguish and shame of poverty not far off : it was a desolate wilderness behind me and before me. When troubles and calamities visit men tolerably happy in their circumstances, there is ordinarily a swift recovery from the first depression of spirit. The mind gets tired of grieving, takes hold of comforting thoughts and pleasant hopes, and creates for itself transient if not permanent relief. The gnawing anxiety that cannot be forgotten, is often dulled by distraction ; it is by distraction that men shut out the remembrance of sin, and the dread of judgment ; it is by distraction we dull the conscience and suppress those anxious, restless questionings concerning our mortal state, which indicate as clearly as the subtlest arguments the responsibility of man to his Maker. But, as all means of distraction fade away when face to face with death, so it is at certain moments in most men's lives, though death

be seemingly far off. Earthly pleasures, earthly hopes, delicately selfish or coarsely brutish, "the painted veil which those who live call life," fall from us, and are no more felt or seen: we are alone: face to face with eternity.

It was thus with me that night. I was poor, friendless, and forsaken; I yearned to pour out my sorrows, and confess my sins at the feet of a Being, perfectly just, perfectly good, whose eye could gauge my baseness to the very depths, yet who would take me to His arms, all weak, guilty, helpless as I was, and give me the comfort of His love.

I walked to and fro in agitation of mind. On my chimney-piece was Vaughan's Bible: I had preserved it carefully wherever I went: it lay always conspicuous amongst my books and papers. Strangers would have no doubt concluded that I was a godly man; but, in truth, all these months I had never seriously sat down to read it. I will not say I had never opened it; I had done so in a musing, melancholy way, chiefly to recall to my recollection the friend who gave it to me or mark and compare the marginal notes in his well-known handwriting.

I took it up that night, and read it for the first time in earnest. Was I suddenly awakened? Did a flood of light burst upon my soul? If it was so, this is not the place to describe the process. No, my spiritual course has been narrow, steep, and rugged; a long, slow struggle, hard to sustain, sparingly relieved by consolations measured out drop by drop, rarely broken by snatches of tremulous hope. But what then? Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Is this what divines mean by faith? I know not; but this I know, that if my sin be want of faith, God can forgive this sin also: all things with Him are possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

PEACE BUT NOT REST.

My fellow-lodgers on the floor below were not always such troublesome neighbours as I found them the first night; their jollifications were of a periodical nature, and in the intervals, my lodging, poor as it was, pleased me well enough: my mind was too anxious to care much for outward comforts.

One day, sallying forth as usual to pursue my dreary task of wandering about the streets of a great city, in search of those who might after all be hundred of miles away, I heard, on passing the room occupied by the widow landlady and her daughter, the sound of some one sobbing; moved by an instinct of compassion, I pushed open the door, and looked in. Coiled up in a large arm-chair by the fireside, was the widow's daughter, with a handkerchief round her head, seemingly in much trouble.

When I spoke to her first, her tears only flowed faster, and she answered pettishly that I could do her no good ; my voice and manner, however, soothed her, and by-and-by she opened her mind to me. The girl was liable to headaches, and was suffering from one now ; the men in the room opposite had kept her awake all night with their songs and uproar ; mother would not stop them or turn them out ; they brought her in seven shillings a week, let alone the washing and cooking ; mother would rather see her in her grave than lose a shilling ; and so on.

I talked to the girl soothingly, and gave her some restorative mixture from a chemist's near. As she revived, she became more communicative, and I soon arrived at the conclusion that the poor, pale, crippled girl was much more seriously ill than her mother had any notion of. The same day I talked to her mother, and suggested her procuring quieter tenants for the room opposite ; she sharply told me to mind my own business, and the girl came in for a scolding in consequence of my interference.

The matter dropped for a few days ; but at length, moved by pity for the girl, I determined

to rent the room myself, and offered the same rent as that now paid ; this arrangement was acceded to, on condition that the rent was paid each week in advance ; I could make the sacrifice without present inconvenience, but it prevented my putting by more than a mere trifle against future contingencies.

The invalid was grateful, and, having thus won her heart, I used my influence to draw her thoughts to higher things than earthly comforts and sorrows ; I procured her books from the library, and read to her myself when I had leisure and opportunity ; it was a happiness to me to feel that I was in a humble way doing some good. The mother, absorbed with her lodgers, and looking sharp after her weekly rents, paid little heed to my visits. I seldom looked in, save when she was engaged in the kitchen below.

Paying her the rent one Saturday evening, I said to her, quietly,—

“ Your daughter is dying ; you had better call in a surgeon ; possibly it is not too late.”

The woman was angry.

“ Now, I tell ye what 'tis. You've given me a deal of trouble ever since you've put foot in

my house—more than all my other lodgers put together. What for d'ye worry and vex me with your silly talk, when I've my hands full of work from morning till night? My daughter's as well as you are, or maybe better. A mother's a better judge nor a stranger, whether gentleman or no gentleman; and whichever you be, 'tain't for I to say."

In the meantime my own anxieties increased as my small stock of cash melted gradually away. Credit I could not get; the street where I resided, though not disreputable, had a character for poverty; the moment I murmured the word "credit," the tradespeople looked at me with suspicion and aversion. I could hardly blame them; there was sharp competition amongst them; they had families to maintain; why should they risk their property for the benefit of a needy stranger? If I had been a half-clad beggar, they would have shared a meal with me; but there was something of the gentleman still lingering in my shabby attire, and therefore when I asked for credit, I instantly became a very suspicious character.

I had heard and read of pawnbrokers' shops,

and had noticed one often and often, not a hundred yards off, and wondered whether I should ever pay a visit to it. I went there now. It was of some importance to me to go downstairs, and get out of the house unobserved; I hurried down with a bundle of things whilst the inmates were busy over their midday meal. When in the street I was careless enough; it mattered little what the world thought of me now; I was, moreover, one amongst a thousand; want makes men at ease one with the other. The articles I pawned were some articles of clothing and my watch. The amount realized was pitifully small; the broker saw by my manner I was a novice, and took advantage of me; impudence is as useful in driving a bargain with a pawnbroker, as in statesmanship, public speaking, and other spheres of intellectual activity.

By the end of another fortnight, I was run so close, that a miscalculation in purchasing my food one day, left me the next day penniless. It was Saturday. I had taken the step of asking my bankers to advance me a few pounds previous to quarter-day; they had accommodated me once before, but in a civil letter intimated it would not

be in their power to deviate again from the strict rules laid down in the conduct of their affairs. Therefore, although it wanted only a few days to quarter-day, I was not certain my request would be favourably entertained; that morning, however, came a reply, civilly stating that the managers met next week, and my letter would be laid before them; the clerk, who was well acquainted with me, added, by way of encouragement, that he doubted not the request would be at once granted. But this to me, who meantime was without funds and without credit, was not substantial comfort; for the first time in my life I was in want of food.

For the last ten days or so, I had ceased to procure my meals from the woman of the house; I had got them elsewhere as cheaply as I could, and now and then purchased a few pennyworth of bread and cheese, and walked out into the country to eat it. Ignorant of the change in my circumstances, the temper of my landlady was not improved by these proceedings; she thought I cast a slight on her cookery, and robbed her of privileges justly belonging to her.

When Saturday evening came, having eaten

nothing but some bread saved from yesterday's dinner, and unwilling to go forth and dispose of the few favourite books still in my possession, I asked the landlady to let me speak to her a moment in my room. With a quiet self-possession that almost surprised myself, I briefly explained my circumstances ; I had neither money nor food, although expecting a remittance next week, and should feel thankful for a meal.

The woman's face was stern enough at all times, but it now grew actually fierce ; yet scarcely fierce ; it was too cold and rigid to be called so. She did not speak for a full minute ; her eye, darkly louring upon me, charged like a thunder-cloud ; then she said abruptly,—

“ Young man, you leave this house to-morrow.”

I remonstrated calmly ; trying to put the matter before her in a reasonable way ; as for appealing to her heart, it was armed with steel, plate over plate.

She went on,—

“ Young man, answer me this. Is it in the agreement that I'm to find you in victuals ? What ? Aren't you ashamed to come upon a poor lone widow woman like me, working the flesh off her bones from sunrise to sunset—you, a tall, strong,

able-bodied man—and eat her out of house and home? What? If I were in your shoes, I had rather sweep the streets or crack stones, than rob a poor widow and her fatherless child. A pretty fellow truly!" And so she continued for another ten minutes; I sat down and listened in silence.

After pausing to hear if I had anything to say, she strode slowly to the door, and there paused to take another stare at me. Still I did not speak, and at length she left the room muttering to herself.

Not many minutes passed, when back she came again, carrying a cup of tea and some slices of bread and butter; placing the same on the table, she said in her harsh voice,—

"There, young man, there's food for you: and now mind you, this is your last night under this roof; I can't let a creature starve right under my nose; but mark, to-morrow you pack up your traps and start."

I thanked her, and took what she offered me. The moment her back was turned, and the door closed, I ate and drank with eagerness; seldom did a meal seem more delicious. But to-morrow—what should I do then? I put the thought from

me; whatever happened was God's will. Before I retired to rest, opening my door to fetch some coals, I heard voices in the widow's room—the one harsh and austere, the other plaintive and broken by sobs: the daughter was pleading my cause, but it was in vain; I must leave the house to-morrow.

Sleep, notwithstanding my anxieties, came to me sweetly and consolingly. About midnight, however, some hours after I was in bed, I waked up; at the moment I scarce knew why, but presently heard a stir in the house; a door was opened and shut once or twice; then came a knock at my own door, and the widow entered, pale, haggard, trembling: she carried a candle which shook to and fro in her unsteady hand.

“Susan's not very well.”

This was all she said, and the words did not imply much. But the woman's harsh face was quivering with emotion; there was plainly something much amiss. I told her to return to her child and I would come directly. Hastily dressing myself, I crossed the passage, and entered the room; two or three of the poor dressmakers were already there, doing the best they could, as

zealously as if the widow had been the tenderest of friends to them.

The moment I saw the poor girl I knew she was very ill; her eye lighted up at seeing me, and she tried to stretch out her hand to take mine. No hesitation was there on the mother's part now to incur expense. She told me in a hoarse whisper that I was to get the best advice in the town. Never mind the money; she had enough and to spare; she had been hoarding it up for Susan. I ran to fetch a surgeon.

Through the cold dark streets I hurried, and in half an hour returned with the surgeon; he sat down by the bedside, and said deliberately,—

“ Well, my poor girl, I don't think you are long for this world.”

Conceive the horror of her grace or my lady if the fashionable physician should express himself so impolitely in her presence! Yet I don't think our surgeon was hard-hearted; the poor are accustomed to plain speaking, and on the whole it is best to address them accordingly.

The girl said she was ready to go whenever the Lord should call her; the mother fell on the floor in hysterics; it was a scene distressing

enough in that dreary, dim-lit chamber ; the pale thin girl motionless on her narrow bed ; the mother stretched on the floor, struggling and screaming ; yet there was comfort too. The surgeon was kind and helpful ; the young women, doing as he bade them, docile as children, with the tears running down their cheeks.

We removed the mother to another room, and by degrees she became more calm, or, I should say, more petrified in her grief.

When the sun was up, and the sabbath bells began to ring out into the clear frosty air, I went forth on another errand. The girl was somewhat better. The surgeon said there was a chance of her recovery ; but she was still very ill. I would call on the rector of the parish and beg him to visit her after morning service ; he was a good earnest man, but the parish was large, the population dense ; there was much poverty, much sickness ; unless cases of suffering were brought specially before him or his curates, many might pass by unnoticed as bubbles on a stream. On calling at the rectory, which was in the suburbs, I found that the rector was from home visiting some sick poor, and would not return till after

morning service ; I would go to the parish church and wait till he came out. This church I had never attended, there being churches and chapels nearer my lodging.

The service was a comfort in my anxious, restless, dejected condition ; it quieted me, and gave me hope. But when, as was not unusual in those days, the organist played a voluntary of a few minutes' duration after the second lesson, a strange glow of pleasure stole over me. The piece was very beautiful ; it began in a minor key, a slow, plaintive, exquisitely modulated strain that filled the listener's eyes unconsciously with tears ; gradually—as gradually as dawn melts into the light of the morning—a gentle whisper of hope blended with those melancholy notes, breathing soft compassion, tender consolation, calm, holy encouragement. The music swelled more and more into the major key, yet through the rich, sonorous, joyous sounds, the ear still caught distant echoes of the sorrowful strain with which the piece had commenced, fainter and fainter, until all was swallowed up in a full and measured stream of tranquil melody, wrapping the mind in contentment and peace. The music was very

beautiful; but that was not all; I had heard that same strain in the old hall of Glenarvon; it recalled to my mind a crowd of touching associations; moreover, though it might have been fancy, something in the style and expression of the organist's performance affected me. What if it was the dear one whom I had so long sought? My heart beat fast, my head swam, the objects round me vibrated like shadows in undulating water; I longed to leave my place, and hasten to the gallery; colder and more prudent thoughts restrained me. Frequent disappointment had chilled and repressed a nature naturally sanguine; I sat out the service patiently; nay, I almost dreaded to make inquiry, lest my expectations should prove erroneous. It were better to listen Sunday after Sunday to that instrument, imagining that it was Rosamund, whose firm delicate touch bade it pour forth those beautiful sounds, than inquire, only to find that all was a miserable delusion.

After service, I went to the vestry to speak to the clergyman respecting the sick girl; he was interested, wished he had heard of the case before, and promised to call in the afternoon; I longed,

yet feared to ask the organist's name, and took my leave. Passing through the churchyard, I met one of the officials, a clerk or pew-opener; in as unconcerned a voice as I could, I asked the organist's name. The man stared at me, and gave a name—I forget what now—some common name; I might still have hoped, for Rosamund had possibly assumed another name; but, no—the organist was a man.

I walked moodily homewards. Letters awaited me that for awhile distracted my thoughts.

My letters came to me circuitously; sometimes after several days' delay; the reason was, that I kept my real address secret, save from Miss Cossett, and one other person—Edith Vaughan. Edith was now almost my only friend; we rarely corresponded, but she undertook and carefully discharged the duty of fetching my letters from the Glenarvon post-office, my nominal address, and forwarding them to me under cover. Sir Hugh Littlecot was dead, but I could scarcely believe myself free; there were enemies still left; I was in debt, and dreaded publicity, for my hopes of earthly happiness were at the mercy of my creditors in London. I had written, as I have said, to my

cousin Ferris, but no answer had been sent ; the reason was now explained in a letter from the Continent, whither he had fled to escape a criminal prosecution. The affairs of the Aberfoil Iron Works Company had been laid open to view ; there had been an ignominious exposure ; a regular system of fraud and embezzlement had been carried on for many years by certain of the managing directors, amongst whom were Ferris and Crawdle. Lord Annandale, Sir Hugh Littlecot's heir-at-law, obtained information from the papers seized by Winifred, and delivered to his lawyers ; a flood of light was poured on proceedings hitherto unknown, and even unsuspected. Ferris in some way got scent of what was impending, and fled ; Crawdle was apprehended and lodged in the county gaol ; there were whispers that Apwood was deeply implicated, but the man was not to be found.

What perhaps sharpened Lord Annandale's zeal in the matter was this. Sir Hugh Littlecot, notwithstanding his large estates and reputed wealth, was found to have died poor ; immense sums had been squandered ; but how, or on whom, was not clear ; the estate of Severn Banks was so heavily mortgaged, as to make it

doubtful whether the fee simple of which Lord Annandale came into possession was a boon or an incumbrance.

The Annandales were bitterly disappointed. They had courted Sir Hugh assiduously for some years past. Lady Annandale had lavished on him a shower of little attentions. His lordship's services were believed to have been more weighty ; to them was attributed the undeniable influence possessed by the Tory baronet in the cabinet of a Whig ministry. Yet a paltry ten thousand pounds was the probable net residue of Sir Hugh Littlecot's property after all demands were satisfied. To add to Lord Annandale's vexation, the state of Sir Hugh's affairs was not known till after the funeral ; and the funeral had been conducted with ostentatious grandeur and costly pomp at the expense of the heavily-incumbered estate. His lordship then was angry and disgusted. It was at this particular juncture that there came into his lawyer's hands the papers relating to the Aberfoil Iron Works Company ; conspicuous amongst them was a private account-book in cipher, and, what was important, a paper containing a key to that cipher ; his lordship concluded that Sir Hugh

had been robbed, and forthwith waged war to the knife on the swindling directors.

Ferris owned only the life interest of Glenárvon ; the reversion, he promised should be mine ; I confess I did not attach much value to his promises. The life interest was appropriated by the creditors ; but Ferris had managed to put in a safe place a small fund adequate, and barely adequate, to the maintenance of his daughters and himself.

Amongst the shareholders of the Aberfoil Iron Works Company had been William Vaughan ; his daughter became entitled to a share of the plunder disgorged by the guilty directors. Edith wrote me word of this herself, adding in the course of her letter some allusion to Lord Abermaur ; he had asked forgiveness, and begged earnestly to be allowed to see her ; she had answered, that there was another whose forgiveness ought to be first obtained. I was therefore encouraged to look forward to a reconciliation with my former friend.

Meantime, I was still without resources ; but the gaunt landlady was now my friend, and, without previous communication, brought me my

meals, asking no question as to the payment. Her daughter was very ill, but recovery was not impossible.

A day or two after the Sunday referred to, the landlady, having removed my breakfast things, came back again, and carefully shutting the door, approached me with rather a mysterious expression of countenance.

Thinking she was going to demand payment of my rent and board, I answered,—

“I know what you are going to say; but I have not a shilling in my possession. I can however promise payment of every farthing I owe next week.”

“You needn’t fret yourself about the money; it bain’t that I want to talk about. It’s about that parson.”

“Well, what of him? He’s a kind man.”

“The man’s kind enough. But I don’t like his asking so many questions. He’s been asking no end of things about you. Now, I know you’re as poor as Job; and when parsons and such like ask questions about poor men, ‘tain’t always for their good. There, I have given you warning, and now do as you like. Only, if you’ve a mind to

shift your quarters, there's a sister of mine t' other end of the town, and she'd arrange to take you in; you could bide there snug till we knew what the parson was after."

I thanked her, and promised to think it over.

I did so, but the result of my reflections was probably contrary to what my landlady anticipated; instead of changing my lodgings to avoid the suspicious attentions of the "parson," I took my hat and sallied forth to seek an interview with him.

It was a pretty long walk to his house, and what with my haste, and the agitation of my mind, roused by a vague but irrepressible hope of learning tidings of Rosamund, my face, usually pale, was flushed, and my manner excited; I was shabbily attired, and my coat none of the newest; my hat, though sedulously brushed, had an unfortunate dent on one side that gave me a disagreeably rakish appearance; all this was against me, and the highly respectable maid-servant who opened the doctor's door, versed in the outward signs and natural phenomena of beggary and imposture, eyed me from head to foot with an air of grave dissatisfaction. How often in my

days of prosperity had I reconnoitred in a similar way some squalid unseemly applicant for alms, and possibly with as little cause !

When a man's respectability is dubious, he cannot do better in this country than assume a swaggering manner, and talk in a loud tone of voice ; it goes a great way to ensure deferential treatment ; on the other hand, a quiet modest deportment will be fatal to him ; society will shrink back, and policemen have their eye upon him immediately. But when a man is manifestly and confessedly void of respectability, *Anglicè*, void of cash, swaggering does not go down ; he may be as civil as he likes ; it can do no harm, and may do good. My experience of poverty, though brief, had been very bitter ; I had learnt some of its lessons well ; therefore I, not long since a wealthy squire, a county magistrate, nay, a member of the legislature, humbly touched my hat to the maid-servant, and solicited her kind offices in procuring me an interview with her master. "Master," however, was busy ; he was always busy of mornings ; still she would go and inquire.

"Meanwhile, young man, you may walk in,

and sit down in the porch, but mind you wipe your shoes on the mat."

I waited in the porch, with the east wind whistling disagreeably in my ears; at length, a tall young man with a white neckcloth, rigid as frozen snow, marched out from a room adjoining; he was the curate. Dr. Piers was engaged, and had sent him to ascertain my business; I had not given my name to the servant.

"Your name, my good man?" said the curate, in a voice as chilly as the snowy neckcloth.

"It is of no consequence, sir; I can call again."

"No honest man is ashamed of his name; come, my man, out with it!"

"Herbert Chauncey."

"Eh? what? well, I must write that down: it's a queerish name, my man, let me tell you that;" and he made me spell it over to him once or twice. "And now then, where d'ye come from? what's the name of your parish? you seem a south-country chap; how long have you been in these parts? What, only a month! Now, my good man, this won't do; we have plenty of our own poor to maintain; we don't want any

strangers here; you must get back to your own parish; no, no, can't hear a word more; it's no use your talking; go back to your parish; a rolling stone gathers no moss; be off with you; here, Betty, open the front door!"

The curate's rapid utterance, and eyes fixed not upon me, but upon the opposite corner of the porch, were circumstances unfavourable to our coming to a right understanding; but I did not like the notion of being summarily dismissed as a tramp, and just as the curate whisked round to take his departure, I took him gently but firmly by the arm, and wheeling him back once more face to face, respectfully told him he was wholly at fault as to my character and my business.

"Well I niver!" cried Betty. "Where's your manners, young man?"

"Fetch a constable this instant!" gasped the curate, who thought I was going to rob him.

But at that juncture the good-natured voice of Dr. Piers was heard inquiring what could possibly be the matter? Then recognizing who I was, he beckoned me into his study, to the immeasurable amazement of my two companions.

"Well," said Dr. Piers, as soon as we were seated, "and how is the poor girl to-day?"

"Rather better, sir, thank you; but it is not about her that I have called."

The doctor looked at me askance, as much as to say he was perfectly aware of it, stirred the fire vigorously, and settling himself in his chair, prepared to listen to what I had to say. My story was a long one; yet to secure the doctor's sympathy and co-operation, I must tell it out unreservedly; one thing encouraged me as I proceeded—he listened with evident interest.

"It is perfectly clear," he at length exclaimed; "there has been a deal of roguery; I have thought so this month past."

"This month? Why, how did you come to know aught of my affairs a month ago?"

The doctor was for a moment embarrassed; then said, with a laugh—

"You are too quick for me; but never mind, I don't think I have done any harm; it is but right to bring man and wife together."

His words and manner sent the blood rushing faster and faster through my veins. Starting from

my chair, I seized his hand and implored him in the name of Christian charity not to keep me longer in suspense.

“Nay, I have no certain knowledge ; I only go by conjecture. A few weeks ago, a young married lady came into this neighbourhood with a letter of introduction to me from a friend. I did what I could to make her comfortable, and at her request procured her pupils in music and singing ; sometimes, too, she took the place of my organist, who is old and infirm. There was a mystery about her ; she appeared bowed down by a great sorrow, and, as my friend informed me, went under an assumed name, to avoid the ill-usage of a disreputable husband—excuse me if I hurt your feelings, but so I was told ; well, accident put me in possession of her real name, and soon after I stumble upon yourself—be patient a moment longer—and I have been quietly planning ever since how to bring you together. But it would be a breach of honour to do so without her sanction.”

“I will swear not to see her without her permission ; only let me write to her and I am satisfied. I am a poor friendless man, much

humbled by trials; she has nothing to fear at my hands."

"To-day, Mrs. Piers has taken her and the little one a bit of an excursion; they will not be home till the afternoon; but I will show you her lodgings." He took his hat, and led the way out of the house.

The lodging was close by—a couple of rooms in a small semi-detached villa. I followed the doctor into the sitting-room, and in a moment knew that it was Rosamund's; there were slight tokens that I recognized; the few books, the small glove on the table, the freshly written note on the chimneypiece, the bouquet of spring flowers arranged in the simple tasteful fashion so familiar to me—all told me that I was in Rosamund's room. I sat down near the window overcome with emotion; the good doctor threw it open to give me air.

Presently I turned to the writing-table, opened the blotting-book so lately touched by that dear hand, and wrote a few unsteady lines; I folded up my note with the papers given me by Winifred, and left the packet on the table ready against Rosamund's return; then having shaken

hands with the doctor, returned to my dreary lodgings.

Late that afternoon my landlady suddenly stalked into my room, clapped me on the shoulder, and exclaimed—

“Now then, what be at? The parson has just driven up in a close fly. Be sure there’s some one with him, and mischief is afoot. There’s a trap-door leading out on the roof, and I have set it ajar. D’ye twig what I mean?”

I believe the poor woman, whose heart, hardened by rough usage and many trials, had a soft place or two still left in it, was persuaded I was some notorious criminal of gentlemanly birth and extraction, skulking from public observation. But I did not make my escape through the trap-door; I rose from my chair, and waited near the door, ready for any one who might want me.

There were footsteps and voices on the stairs outside. The clergyman went into the sick girl’s room. Then came a quiet, gentle tap at my room door; I opened it with an unsteady hand. A lady stood outside; her face was towards me, but she wore her veil down.

That mattered not; I knew it was my darling

Rosamund, and held out my arms, faint with joy and fear. The next moment that honest generous wayward heart was beating against mine ; we could not speak, but sobbed in one another's arms.

That day was indeed a bright spot in a chequered life ; ere evening came, no longer friendless and desolate, I found myself seated with my wife's arm round me and her hand in mine, our little Egbert sleeping quietly on the sofa near us, in the small but pleasant lodging which was now our common home. Once more I listened as of old in dreamy contentment to the music of that voice with its faintest touch of a foreign accent ; once more those deep blue eyes gazed tenderly into mine. Soon, however, my heart beat faster and my eyes grew dim ; Rosamund was recounting the story of her life during the last few months ; the thought of all she had suffered sank deeper and deeper into my mind, and filled me with a grief reclaimed only from bitterness by the assurance of her love.

“ Dearest,” she said, “ when I quitted Rouen with my father, it was in full confidence that you would follow us ; sorrow and anger struggled for the mastery, but I clasped close to my heart the

memory of your love, and in blind unreasoning faith refused to discard you. You came not: how could your absence be explained? Nothing was heard of you; Sir Hugh departed, but Alphonse compelled Winifred to carry out his wishes; she did so faithfully: all letters from Rouen were intercepted at the post-office. You, indeed, were in prison, and could not write, but others did so; both Edith and Parker Simpson. I think Edith's alone would have sufficed to dispel my miserable doubts and fears, but the clergyman's letter went further; it lifted the veil from all the dark wretchedness of the previous week, and must have satisfied me, even had my heart been coldly neutral. The clergyman had been duped and made a tool of; Alphonse had lied, was in league with Sir Hugh, cared not what crime he committed so you were the sufferer. Therefore Parker Simpson retracted or qualified all he had written; nay, solemnly declared he believed you were pure and faithful, and offered, if need were, to meet me at B—— forthwith. Neither of these letters, neither Edith's nor his, reached me until this day; they were in the packet Winifred gave you; some lurking com-

punction induced her to preserve them for possible use hereafter. Therefore, hour after hour I waited at B—— in shuddering suspense and misery ; no tidings came of you ; how could I explain your continued absence ? how but by concluding you could not tear yourself from Edith ?

“ My father was now compelled to return to the *Argus*; bitter mortification and grief, gusts of anger, alternating with longing tenderness, agitated my mind ; I accompanied him to Spit-head ; waited a day, still hoping to hear from Miss Cossett of your arrival : finally, after a long struggle, determined to sail in the *Argus*. I wrote a letter to justify my conduct and disarm your resentment, though indifference rather than anger was what I dreaded : a letter calmly, carefully—yes, even coldly—expressed, whilst my heart was wrung with passionate grief ! Scarcely, however, was the anchor up and the ship under way than doubts beset me : did I well to abandon a husband who, whatever his faults, had loved me once, and might even now repent and turn to me again ? Did I well to sever him from his child in revenge for a hasty threat retracted as soon as

uttered? It was too late: onwards went the stately ship borne down Channel by a favourable wind; before us stretched a glimmering waste of waters; behind, the dusky outline of the Cornish coast blended with the gloom of a distant thunder-storm; the waves beat heavily against the sides of the slowly rolling ship; the wind moaned and whistled through the rigging; there was a solemn strangeness in the scene that awed and depressed me; I drew our little one to my heart and my tears flowed freely.

"The presence of my father and the kindness of all around somewhat cheered me; the knowledge that there was no possibility of retracing my steps nerved me to endurance. Our cruize indeed would under other circumstances have been pleasant and joyous; the weather grew calm, the nights were clear and starlight, the days fresh and balmy; seated on the quarterdeck I gazed at the rippling waves, or followed the track of some distant sail, or watched the busy movements of the sailors. As our cruize drew to a close, and the *Argus*, changing her course, glided homewards under a press of canvas in the quiet sunny weather, my heart grew lighter and lighter;

surely even now there was hope of reconciliation; surely you had not abandoned me for ever. We anchored off Plymouth; the letter purporting to be from your London lawyers was immediately placed in my hands: the tenor of it was stern and cruel, threatening me with the harshest proceedings; no expense would be spared to coerce and humiliate me; nay, my darling child was to be wrested from me and transferred to the charge of strangers! I had little experience in the ways of the world or the forms of law; I read and believed. The shock almost stunned me; the next twenty-four hours now seem a blank; I scarcely knew what I did; one absorbing anxiety filled my mind—to escape out of your reach, no matter how or whither.

“But I will not dwell longer on this time of trial; we reached Exeter, and my mind became more tranquil, my view of the future less utterly hopeless. A letter reached me from Sir Hugh; it did not at the moment strike me as strange that he should know my address; the old man urged the Christian duty of submission; ay, however reckless, cruel, and dissolute my husband might be, and he feared was, ‘It is clearly the wisest

policy ; for, let me tell you, my dear young lady, that the laws of England, with which your acquaintance is probably somewhat limited, bear heavily upon the wife ; resistance will only lead to public exposure, painful humiliation, the sharpest coercive measures. To yield may melt your husband's heart ; you know, almost as well as I do, his inconstant nature ; what if even now he be yearning after a little change ? Gentleness and docility might wean him from his present discreditable connection ; it is worth trying, and will at all events secure to you that greatest of blessings, an easy conscience.' Thus far Sir Hugh : his object was to incense me still more against you ; may he have repented of his wickedness ! At first, however, as was natural, my feelings on reading the letter were of a mixed character : angry I no doubt was, but with Sir Hugh as much as with yourself : what impertinence of this old man to sit in judgment on my husband ! how dared he to denounce you ? The evidence of your guilt, though strong, was not conclusive ; at all events, what business had Sir Hugh to interfere ? Another incident affected me ; Wini-fred left my service ; there was that in her look

and manner which perplexed me; was it grief at parting, or was it remorse for some secret injury inflicted on me? In my loneliness I mused long upon the past. Winifred was endeared to me by unwearying devotion to myself, but still more to our little one; it was this, as you know, dearest, that made me so loath to yield to your wish to dismiss her; ah, I was punished for my obstinacy. Now, however, that she was gone and I was freed from her influence, I seemed to see things more clearly. I had written to you begging you to meet me; you had not replied. The thought again and again recurred to me: do not be satisfied with letters; go to your husband; see him face to face; pay no heed to anything but his own words uttered in your presence.

"I set forth with Egbert, travelling by coach to Meadshire; at Stoke I paused on my journey and rested some hours, being much fatigued. You can imagine my emotion when the country round Glenarvon unfolded to my view; yet the nearer I approached the dear old mansion the calmer and more confident grew my spirit; the remembrance of our wedded love was strengthened and brought home to me by the spectacle of

familiar objects we had together gazed upon and together loved ; hope once more revisited my heart.

" I had hired a small carriage at Stoke, and as soon as we were in sight of Glenarvon I desired the driver to put me down at the private entrance into the wood, wishing to reach the house unobserved ; baby of course was with me, but the distance was not great, I felt strong enough to carry him much farther. Opening the gate—how often we have passed through it together !—I entered the wood, and walked quickly along the grassy path leading to the upper garden. One or two trifling incidents troubled me ; you know the path through the wood ; at one point it passes near the home farm ; close to the gate into the yard I noticed a bright-coloured ribbon on the ground ; stooping to examine it, I perceived it was the collar of my sweet little fawn that used to be tethered in the west paddock !—that was not much perhaps ; but what pained me was that the collar was spotted with blood ! Had any harm come to it ? was the poor thing dead ? I would not look into the farmyard, but hastened onward at a quick pace. On the slope near the garden I

came to the summer-house—many a time, dearest, have we sat there talking and reading in quiet happiness ! It was quite changed ; the moss had been stripped from the inside, and instead, a quantity of vulgar shells and fragments of spar had been cemented against the walls and roof to give the effect of a grotto ; a little lamp with trumpery coloured glass hung from the centre ; it was a mere Vauxhall Garden imposture ! Wondering what this could mean, I passed on, and at length reached the hanging walk over the upper garden ; in some agitation I bent over the parapet ; perhaps you might be there ! But no, there was no trace of you, only on the beautiful smooth bowling green behind the house two or three men busily employed in cutting out flower-beds of various hideous shapes ; this vexed and startled me.

“ Presently a lady appeared ; she wore a hat with drooping black feathers ; a pang of anxiety crossed my mind ; who was she ? It was Miss Isabella Ferris. The truth flashed upon me instantly ; Glenarvon had been given up ; your cousins had lost no time in taking possession, and improving the property after their taste ! I had

miscalculated the time when Glenarvon would pass from our hands ; the evil day I knew indeed was drawing near, but that was all. Do what I would a convulsive sob burst from me : Miss Ferris looked up, but before she saw me I had taken flight.

“ My disappointment and trouble of mind weakened and exhausted me more than my hurried walk with baby in my arms ; I rested for a few minutes under one of the trees. The walk to the entrance into the wood seemed to have greatly lengthened ; by the time I reached the gate I was giddy with fatigue ; the driver helped me into the carriage, and, at my request, drove me to the village post-office ; I might there learn tidings of you.

“ The poor old postmistress welcomed me half smiling, half crying ; but when I showed her the baby, she wrung her hands and wept aloud ; ‘ only to think,’ she said, ‘ that the little darling should be robbed of his birthright in cold blood, and by that wicked old cousin, the banker ! ’

“ Sadly weak, and unable to bear much of a scene, I begged for a cup of tea, partly for the sake of refreshment, partly to turn the poor

woman's thoughts elsewhere. When I was stepping into the carriage again, and not till then, I asked for your address, proposing to take any letters directed to you. The woman answered,— ‘Bless you, dear ma'am, I don't know the squire's address, I don't, indeed ; but Miss Edith—Miss Vaughan I should say, seeing I have known her from a little maid no higher than the table—Miss Edith has the address safe enough ; once a week she calls and asks for letters directed to him ; but, bless you, ma'am, let me make you another cup of tea, you are turned as pale as a sheet !’ Pale indeed I was, pale and trembling ; to stop and parley was useless ; back to the inn at Stoke I was driven. Why should I seek you ? It was clear that Edith Vaughan and yourself were closely united once more ; yes, if not actually together, you were *en rapport* ; you were on terms of affectionate intimacy. Thus I reasoned, or, I should say, felt ; for the present a gulf yawned between us ; I would go my way, and leave you to go yours.

“ Ill as I was, Stoke was no place of rest ; it reminded me too vividly of the past. As soon as I regained a little composure, a little strength,

I started for the north, travelling slowly and resting often on the road.

“I did not reach Liverpool for some days after my hasty visit to Glenarvon; a friend in whom I placed confidence had given me a letter of introduction to Dr. Piers: at first I shrank from presenting it, but the pressure of grief and the sense of loneliness began to tell upon my health. My income, too, was very restricted; for baby’s sake as well as my own I must strive to increase it. I gave my letter to the clergyman, and found in him and his wife kind and considerate friends. They procured me pupils. Now you are with me I shall do my work with twofold zeal. Nay, Herbert, do not sigh and shake your head so sorrowfully; we both of us must work, you with your pen, and I with my music and singing; our life may not be void of care, of anxiety, of self-denial, but side by side we will struggle onwards in faith and hope. I have learnt, at least I trust so, self-restraint and patience, and am able to thank God for my troubles. You too, dearest, have suffered; you are sadly altered; you are pale, and thin, and careworn; it shall be my task to watch over you,

and comfort you day by day. The shadow that darkened our way of life is past; our pitiless enemy is dead; we may be once more happy."

Do you ask, reader, whether my cousin Ferris kept his word? Whether Glenarvon reverted to me? Whether Rosamund and myself ever revisited those pleasant haunts of our early married life?

What matters now? It is a thing of the past; all is over and done; here let me pause. I have told one phase of my life's history; there are others; but let me meditate undisturbed on this.

THE END.

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